

# Encounter

March 1977 80p

## Who's Left, What's Right?

Symposium (II)

Golo Mann, David  
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George Urban,  
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Nadine Gordimer  
Story

Ferdinand Mount  
A Last Hurrah  
for 1776

John Cohen  
The Real  
Cyril Burt



## The Peace People

A Report from Ireland  
by Jonathan Power

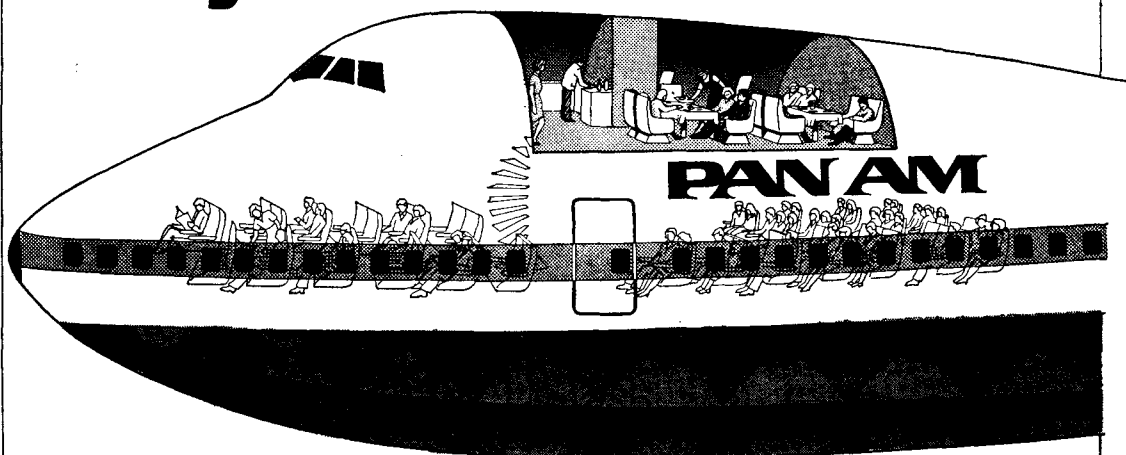
John Wain  
The Night of the First  
Performance of *Comus*

Stuart Maclure  
The English Disease

Melvin J. Lasky  
Weitling: the Utopian  
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Edited by Melvin J Lasky & Anthony Thwaite

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# Encounter

MARCH 1977  
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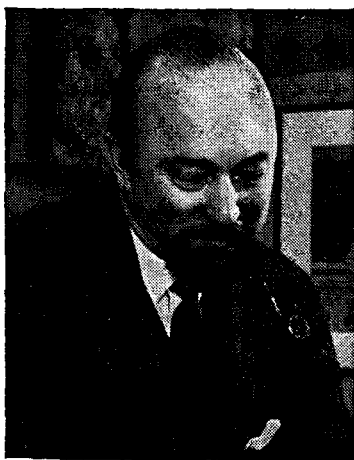
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**Melvin J. Lasky**

# utopia & revolution

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## *A Hunting Accident*

SHE MET HER PHOTOGRAPHER at the Kilimanjaro in Dar. To the new missionaries—FAO and UNESCO representatives, Africa-desk journalists, arts and crafts teachers, Scandinavian documentary filmmakers, Fanonist-Dumontist economist sons and daughters of dead or departed settler families—this means the hotel not the mountain and the monosyllable stands for Dar es Salaam. She was dossing down on the floor in the children's bedroom of a woman professor at the university so she had to wait for an invitation to his room. She saw at once that the photographer was not shy but (she hadn't heard of him) was probably somebody, and not on the lookout for women. It was the old story; she was accustomed to being taken notice of in a certain way. He sat with his pipe and old-fashioned oilcloth tobacco pouch in the bar, easy to find, and put aside his notebooks less to talk than to listen to her with deep attention; but it was not in that way. He quickly became her immediate purpose: she didn't show much guile and that was instinctively wise, because he saw that she had abandoned the tactics that must serve a pretty girl so well, and she saw that he would not be able to resist honesty. When she had finished telling him something in her excited, indignant manner, he would think a long time, smiling at her, his lips pressed together, small-boned brown face fine-lined with the growing intensity of his expression, gazing green eyes darting side-glances away, as if he were laughing delightedly, privately, within, before he answered with his "Why?" "Would you?" "I wonder." He would not have the heart to reject her.

How exciting it was, to be received on such terms! In the sealed and carpeted hotel

room he opened windows that were never meant to be opened and the heat-solid night into which she stretched her arm was even more airless. They agreed that velvet, foam-padded chairs and thick mattresses were Northern luxuries—Southern penances, and she talked of smooth tiles bare to soles, high walls punched free to the sea breeze by lattice. He stroked her sweaty hair away from her cheeks, and it was she who suggested they have a long shower together, he submitting to the old, sweet rites of sensuality with good grace.

It was she who brought him to Ratau's house in another African country. She tried out in her ear how other people might comment: "She took him along with her from Tanzania." She thought how she might say to Ratau: "Clive Nissan was in Dar, he so much wanted to photograph this country after I'd talked such a lot about it." Both were partly true. She had told him of the country she had been born in, daughter of the colonial Minister of Education, and her standing invitation to come back and stay with the youngest son of her father's old friend, the Paramount Chief. She had told him of the terracotta and bottle-green town built of red earth with hedges of euphorbia, where the house was, and of the great tree near the house where the tribal court still met each day to decide disputes between citizens. He had come so far, it was a pity not to go farther—perhaps he had been intending to visit that country anyway; he did not discuss plans much. She brought her suitcase and duffle bag of books to his room and slept a last night with him in the hotel before they took an early plane together. They were met at the other end by one of Ratau's big cars with one of his cousins to

drive them the hundred-and-twenty kilometres to the Chief's town. She watched her photographer's eyes flicking adjustment to the passing scrub and thought how when they were in bed (Ratau would at once understand they should be given a room together) she would be able to say to him: "Didn't I tell you; that endless plain with a single hill peaked up here and there casting its single blue shadow—it's exactly the imaginary country old maps call 'Land of Prester John' or 'Kafferland'."

But they got to bed very late and, five or six people, some rather drunk, like noisy innocent children calling to one another from camp bed to sleeping bag, slept at last before the fire in the livingroom: Ratau had one of his house-parties. Friends from his university days in England and America, people he invited to stay when he was in various countries at various times tended to turn up, and there were always also numerous members of the extended family of his father's three wives with a permanent claim on hospitality, taking it for granted that they would serve the household in some way, while they were there. Ratau with his cajoling African laugh and his ruthless Cambridge accent had told everyone he was getting them all up to go on a hunting trip in the morning; at half-past six he was prodding at sleepers with his ready-laced boots and holding by the limp hand the little waxen-blond Swedish potter from the crafts school in the village whom he had taken to the room he, as host, reserved to himself for the night. One of the distant relatives was behind him with a huge tin tray of coffee mugs and rusks. There was something stronger, Ratau called, for those who felt they had to keep out the morning cold. An old kitchen table stocked with brandy and gin and cane spirit stood permanently among the painted barrels of elephant ear and canvas chairs on the huge verandah that hooded the house. The guns were laid out there, too; he was giving orders to relatives summoned to act as bearers, breaking breeches, putting barrels to his left eye. "Christie—tell me, your friend, what's his name? He'll be one of the guns?" And she laughed, a shade disloyally, because Ratau was so attractive, so unselfconsciously male in his natural assumption of what she had been taught, at her progressive school, was

the conditioned male role of killer. "Shoot with his camera", she said.

"Great. He'll see me get my eland today."

"Ra-tau! Strictly prohibited! Didn't you tell me eland's protected?"

"A chief's allowed one a year. My brother's turn last time, now I'm going to bag mine." He lowered his voice, to tease or flirt: *I'll give you the skin to warm you in London.* She murmured, *Mean it?*

*Always mean what I say, Christie.*

THE SWEDISH BLONDE was not around to hear. When Christine went out on to the gravel drive where a truck had come shaking up under the shouts of some relatives already mounted, she saw her, sitting on a white-washed boulder, yawn like a cat: she was cradling a reluctant toddler with the holy-family reverence Swedish girls display for black children. The photographer was moving about in his unnoticed way among people, his paraphernalia round his neck and bulging the pockets of his usual bush jacket and thin man's large shorts. He gave a hand with lowering the (broken) tail-gate of the truck so that people could climb in but he was not part of the shouting, squealing, laughing and innuendo that made these people who had got to know each other only the previous night feel they were such good friends. He smiled at her as he had before they were lovers; the breasts and thighs and backsides, knees, feet and arms comradely crowded together on the truck seemed to deny the reality of the physical presence he had lent her in a hotel room in Dar. He was certainly married; a passionate boy-and-girl love affair that was the basis of his privacy and whose transformation into domestic peace was the basis of his sympathetic detachment—she would take a bet on it, although she'd never asked him. She hoped, with the edge of defensiveness of one who is at fault, he wasn't sulking because she had said they'd go to the court under the tree and up to the Great Place where the chiefs were buried, this morning. She'd let herself and him be carried off on this hunting party; he might be thinking it was not the kind of thing he would enjoy, but was going along because it was the kind of thing *she* would

enjoy—and she couldn't say, explain, excuse anything, lean a seducer's message against his breathing side in the press of the truck, because she was in the cab up front with Ratau driving and a young black woman, Yolisa, while he was in the open truck behind. She turned her head once and could just see him between jolts that brought others into her vision: little Ulla, the Swede, an old relative-retainer in an ancient balaclava, the huge, laughing engineer husband of Yolisa, great, round, neckless head like a Benin bronze bobbing on a vast chest—all with guns poking up between them. No, of course her photographer wasn't sulking; he must be at least thirty-eight, not a young man of her own age who talked liberation and expected his girls to do whatever he decided.

Ratau drove with reckless authority through the quiet morning fires of his father's and forefathers' town and forded a river of goats on the road leading out of it. At several points in the open country a figure patched together from whatever the poor in rural areas can assemble against winter cold—scarecrow jackets, split patent shoes, a red knitted cap, a sack serving as a cape, a plaid blanket—rose from a culvert or appeared where cattle had tramped down the grass round a thorn tree. A man came towards the truck as to a rendezvous, hand raised in patient, trusted respect; Ratau landed in an applause of dust, shouting from the window to his bearers on the back, calling to the man on the road, who was, indeed, there by arrangement to report on the movement of game for the information of the hunt. Ratau turned and struck out accordingly across the plain to mopane forest, through mopane forest and out into the open again. In the freedom of driving without a road to follow—a progress as suddenly full of haphazard energy as a speedboat in rough water—the skill and comment and laughter of Ratau, the looming and lurching of gold-red trees, the din of the vehicle's clattering, grinding, chuntering metal bones, the people on the back of the truck seemed not to exist for the three in the cab. Once there was a thump on the roof and Ratau, roaring with laughter, slowed down a bit, but the timing with which he changed back and forth from lower to higher gear and the sureness with which he swung his way through wilderness inspired

confidence that in his hands there was no danger to anyone, he would carry everyone through with him, even supposing there actually were to be a load of poor devils somewhere up behind.

IN THIS DIN and euphoria a gun-shot was hardly more than a pop. It was the ragged scream borne away on the edge of the truck's noise and the battering of fists on the cab roof that made the three in the cab recognise the explosion. Yolisa gave a woman's answering cry to any cry, she clutched Christine's thigh. The truck came to a wild stop, Ratau's smooth black arm extended a hard, efficient barrier to prevent the women pitching to the windscreen. At some second's edge in the collision of seen, heard, felt, Christine saw a large object fall past the truck. She twisted her head to the rear window, feeling her neck snap against its stem; it was Yolisa's husband—: not there between the others. His big body flung aside. She imprisoned the black girl's clenched fists in her own; terror sucked her veins flat, she saw herself, them all, standing round this girl's husband, blood running its way, running, running to its ebb and no one with the skill or means to stop it. The helpless struggle of dreams held her in the truck; within that stasis she held fast to the girl to keep death off from her.

And then there was laughter. Shouts: of laughter. The door on the driver's side hung open where Ratau had jumped out. The big engineer was at the window on the passenger's side, signalling his wife to lower it, huffing and puffing, rubbing his right ear, being dusted down by others like a child who has taken a tumble. Christine and the young woman beside her whom she had met twenty-four hours before flung themselves together in a trembling embrace. Like lovers with a moment they cannot share, they hesitated before getting down from the cab. The husband put his arm round his wife as a man does at a party and grinned: "Don't worry, you're not a widow yet." She moved her shoulders and looked irritated. Ratau was teasing him, expertly therapeutic against shock. "Good lord, man, the very sound of a shot and you think you're in the next world."

"Well, I'm not so sure I'm here now—my ear's burning like hell." "Not a scratch to be seen, I assure you. You jumped out of your skin, that's all." The sun, newly risen ruddy, thrust the gaiety of firelight through bronze, carmine, copper, brown and brass cinders of the dry mopane leaves and the static of golden dust thrown up around them. The sleep that holds all forests was broken in upon by celebrating voices and unicorn bursts of laughter went bounding away into the solitude. Somebody got down a case of beer from the truck; it was cold as champagne. The cans were passed from mouth to mouth, calabash fashion. The gun-bearers in their blue overalls with bare black feet close together against the cold sandy earth giggled with pleasure. They spoke no English and the little Swedish blonde was taking the opportunity to try and communicate through the few phrases of their language she had already learnt. This one and that gave versions of how the engineer had jumped, toppled, capered, dived from the truck. He slapped at his ear. "I tell you, quite deaf on that side now. I felt the bullet sear the skin." Someone crept up and shouted in the ear and he cried out; Ratau stood with commandingly outstretched arm, finger jabbing at him, conducting the general laughter.

SHE WENT UP almost awkwardly to the photographer; he really did act as if he were incredibly staid! It would give other people the wrong impression of the kind of man she chose. "You were next to him, weren't you?"

He was lighting the pipe and continued to make small popping noises for a moment or two, those extraordinarily beautiful eyes that had excited her in Dar deeply translucent in three-quarter profile with their expression ellipsed as, at a certain angle, the design that makes the pupil of a sea-glass marble. He smiled a little at her, round the pipe-stem. "The bullet went between us—top of my head and his ear."

Yes—the man she had brought to the party was the smallest and slightest there, when it came to build he didn't look much. "Good God. What was it like?"

"Loud. He's lucky to be alive. If it'd been an inch to the left, it would have gone over

the top of my head, if it'd been an inch to the right, it would've been in his brain." This was in a low conversational voice no one else would have heard. All he said for the company in general was—more or less to Ratau—as the truck was manned again, "Perhaps it would be a good idea if everyone checked the guns were unloaded." Sensible but somehow the kind of dampening suggestion that would come from someone who didn't have quite the style to look danger gallantly in the eye the way this party did. What did he know about the handling of guns, anyway.

Ratau said, not unkindly, "Don't worry, you'll come to no harm. Everything under control."

The Swedish girl, already seated in the truck with the defensive smile of a terrified child, held to the hand, cold and tough as the feel of a tortoise's foot, of the old gunbearer who had never before been touched by a white woman.

Twice the party caught up with three eland who threaded images swiftly into the mopane, a disappearing painted ribbon: the exquisite calligraphy of their broad flanks made them seem two-dimensional. Ratau never got within firing range. If he was disappointed, he was not the kind to show his guests the discourtesy of imposing this upon them; the truck bucked off in other directions, where other game had been reported by the scouts. On a natural park between mopane forests, a herd of Red Hartebeest grazed. They did not see the threat they did not know. The swaying truck did not fit the shape of any predator. The two women in the cab whispered to each other, "Look! Look!" at the marvel of a pattern of life printed and yet moving glossy russet and cream, prehistory and yet alive (tails flicked, coats twitched at parasites, droppings fell elegantly); the herd progressed like a cloud or the outline of water, changing without breaking.

Ratau was out of the driver's seat, up on to the open truck. His bearers jumped down lightly knee-bent, spilled all round in a criss-cross of guns. He followed the English protocol; each of his guests must have the chance to drop a beast before he would take a shot himself. The air cracked and split over the truck. The ancient alert was marked by the single majestic signal of a horn-swept head. The herd left the way mercury runs, a

mass without distinguishable components. Two hundred yards; and then stopped, the lovely masks facing the hunters. In low gear (beside Christine a relative smelling of clothing impregnated with woodsmoke was driving) the truck followed until within range. The guests fired again at their host's instruction. As a piece of rich cloth is grasped at one end and shaken, a shock-wave passed through the herd. They swung away and this time one could hear the wild hobble of their hooves. Some shapes lay on the ground where they had been. "Five, we got five!" the engineer shouted. "Six", Ratau said, putting a hand on the shoulder of another of his friends. "You aimed too low, old man; you've got him in the leg. Try for the neck now." Christine and Yolisa had got out of the cab again. Christine had her hands on her hips, gazing. "One's standing on its own under that tree, there! Look at that!" "Albert's wounded him, his hind leg's gone." "Oh no!" "Hop back in, there's a good girl." She wanted to find the photographer and sit with him on the truck but the men, a herd themselves now, pushed past her unseeingly in their excitement and she had to do as Ratau said and get into the cab again.

THEY ROLLED SLOWLY across the plain towards the acacia under whose thin gauze of shade the markings of the Red Hartebeest showed cleanly. All eyes were fixed on it and it took the gaze as if waiting for them. It stood perfectly steady on three legs with the fourth, left hind, dangling snapped at the joint. There was only this disarticulation and a string of bright red blood to break the symmetry of the creature. "A cow", someone said; and someone else nodded. Ratau stood for encouragement beside the man whose prey it was. No one shuffled. The shot seemed released from the tension of all, and the beast collapsed, but the cry went up—"Still alive!" "My God, finish it off, man!" Ulla and Yolisa covered their ears. "Ratau, you do it!" But Ratau, the patient host, was instructing: "Look, like this—you're point blank, you can't miss—" Sweating, almost giggling with shame and rage at himself, the guest fired again into his beast that lay there panting, breathing still,

looking at him, waiting for the death he owed her. Even that was not a clean shot, though a mortal one. Now she felt herself dying and with the last miracle of co-ordination she could muster drew back her head on the ground and gave a cow's cry, the familiar and gentle, pitiful moo of any clumsy dairy mother. It was as if it were discovered to be true that at midnight on Christmas Eve dumb beasts can speak their sufferings; no one had known that these wild beings can link the abattoir to the hunt, the slave to the free, in that humble bellow. Yolisa and Ulla fled to the cab. Christine stood with the second joint of her forefinger clasped between her bared teeth; she was not thinking of the animal; how horrible this was, he would be thinking, he who had not taken any part, active or vicarious, who had been brought along when what he wanted was to be looking at the Victorian monuments where Ratau's ancestors lay, and watching the council of elders administering the law in the shade of the assembly place, finding sermons in those gravestones and tongues in that tree.

Suddenly she saw he had leapt down from the truck and was walking quickly over to the dying beast. The shorts and veldskoen boots made his small, hard, thin legs look like an ill-nourished schoolboy's, the weighed-down pockets of the bush-jacket and the leather straps of two cameras yoked him. He was walking right into the gaze they all decently turned away from. He went straight up to the beast and, down on one knee, then the other, began to photograph it again and again, close-up, gazing through the camera, with the camera, into the last moments of life passing in its open eyes. His face was absolutely intent on the techniques he was employing; there was a deep line she had never seen before, drawn down either side of his mouth from the sucked-in nostrils. He placed filters over his lens, removed them. He took his time. The beast tried to open its mouth once more but there was no sound, only a bubble of blood. Its eye (now the head had lolled completely into profile, he could see only one) settled on him almost restfully, the faculty of vision bringing him into focus, then fading, as he himself looked steadily into it with his cameras.

He came back to the truck, where Ratau

was explaining the reactions of a herd after some of the animals have dropped. She murmured, "It's still moving"—from afar, the body twitched slackly like a kicked bundle.

"No", he said. "She's gone." He was writing (a date, some figures) in his curling notebook that smelt of tobacco.

The final bag was nineteen—twelve Red Hartebeest and seven Blesbok, most dropped stone-dead with single shots from the host's gun. The eland were not seen again. Yolisa sat in the cab, not looking out, and said, "All I want is to get back and see if my baby's all right." Another truck arrived, finding its way in the wake of the first as if along signposted city streets, and relatives collected and flung up the carcasses with tremendous admiration and glee, making a party-cloakroom pile of pelts and blood.

THE WOMEN SAID they wouldn't touch any of the meat Ratau promised them that night: "You'll see, Red Hartebeest is the best eating of any game." When evening came, and beneath the mantel photograph of the old Paramount Chief with his looped watch-chain, Homburg hat and leopard skin, the fire spread the delicious incense of burning Tambuti wood among the red wine drinkers, and the hunger of the open air was pleasurable as lust, all ate from the belly-shaped enamel pots a one-eyed relative brought round. "Should have been hung first"—Ratau referred Christine to the English cuisine they both knew—"But here, with us, nobody wants to wait." In the kitchen there was feasting, and out in the yard still more people were cooking on a communal open fire. Christine had a lot to drink. She kept an eye on the curiously child-like figure in the old shorts and bush-jacket, she was conscious of the smell of his pipe always somewhere in the room, despite the Tambuti scent, despite the loudness of the rock music, and she hoped

they would get somewhere alone to sleep tonight. She evaded the men who had been dancing with her and found him. "Are you mad with me?"

He was chatting quietly to an old black man who was trying his tobacco in a home-made pipe. "Why?"

"Well that's all right then." She had an urge to kiss passionately that wise-monkey, aesthete's face, to put her hands up under the old khaki clothes and beat her fists at the breast there. He smiled at her affectionately in his appreciation of the old man: she read, "Go off and enjoy yourself."

But it was not till the morning that she held his message in her hand. By the time she got up and picked her way among the sleepers on the livingroom floor, he had gone with the railway bus that paused, palsied by its sonorous diesel engine, to take on passengers and their small livestock for the capital. He had left a note for her, enclosing another to thank Ratau for his hospitality. Both smelled of proximity to the oilcloth tobacco pouch. "You'll be glad to know I saw the sun rise from the Great Place today. It's all you said. You've also said there's nowhere else to stay but a Holiday Inn. I'll be based there. For about a week until the 25-6th, I should think. If you should come down, you'll find me queued up at the help-yourself before the curry-and-rice trough, lunchtime."

She walked through the garden, where butterflies of blossom were alighted on the Bauhinia trees and blood-tendoned bones and tufts of hide, dragged from the yard overnight by dogs, littered the oval of ashen winter grass. Flies blundered at her face. Out in the road dust was luxurious as cream underfoot; under the huge tree old men were assembled and a disaffected citizen or two, hat and stick marking formality, awaited the outcome of a long harangue. She hung about, not too near, as if she had only to be able to understand, that's all, and the speaker would have something to say, for her.

*Jonathan Power*

# Can the Peace People Bring an Irish Peace?

## *Letter from Belfast*



**M**AIREAD COR-RIGAN is 32 and unmarried. Until six months ago her life was nine-to-five as a secretary in a brewery and evenings with the "Legion of Mary" and her family at home in Belfast. On 10 August her

sister's three children (8, 2½ and 6 weeks old) were mown down and killed by an out-of-control car driven by an Irish Provisional Army gunman. The driver, Danny Lennon, was dead at the wheel, the victim of his British army pursuers. She was interviewed on the BBC and, with a passion that has carried her through ever since, she denounced the violence and death that had now caught up with her own family and pledged herself to do everything she could to end it. The seeds of the Peace Movement of Northern Ireland were sown.

Pages could be written about this woman—her warmth, her courage, her self-assurance, her gentle but quietly appealing good looks, her dedication to Church work rather than to boy-friends—but one small story she related to me says more than another six columns would. It was the day of the funeral of the three children. She took some red roses from one of the small white coffins, and she walked alone up to Andersonstown to the house of the mother of the dead gunman. She did not know what she was going to say. She half expected to have the door slammed in her face. In fact she found Danny Lennon's mother crying. Mrs Lennon told her she had been crying for three days. On the kitchen table was a tear-stained letter that she had been trying to write to Mairead's sister—an attempt to say she was sorry for what her son had

done. I don't know exactly how the story ended, for I was too moved to ask her to complete it. But I think it's easy to guess the way it was. For in Mairead's every look, every expression, is a total dedication to a commandment which says "love your enemy."

One more story, for it completes a picture that might otherwise be too sentimental. Coming home a month or so ago from one of the innumerable Peace meetings, she saw two good-looking girls in tight-fitting coats being confronted by two well-armed British soldiers. She stopped her car close by to see what was going on. The soldiers were asking the girls to open their coats to be searched. The girls were protesting that army standing orders said girls could only be searched by a police-woman, and refused to cooperate. The soldiers persisted. Mairead at that point got out and walked over to the soldiers and told them they had no right to search the girls. One of the soldiers, realising who she was, quickly whispered to his companion and they motioned to the girls to go. As they walked off one girl turned to the other and said loudly "I suppose we should say thanks, but I wish I didn't have to say it to *her*."

As everyone knows by now, there are two Peace-Women. Mairead's partner, Betty Williams, is quite a different kind of person. Married to a marine engineer, she spends long months on her own with her children while her husband is at sea. She has something of the look of an energetic working-class wife who hasn't had an easy life. At least that is how she was when I first saw her at a London press conference. Close up, the first impression is not altogether wrong; but there is another side, not least a quickness of mind that cuts through a lot of the rubbish talked these days in Ulster. "Army withdrawal?" she replies scathingly to an English journalist's question about pulling-the-troops-out. "But we have *nine* armies!" She treated some naive campaign

remarks of Jimmy Carter with the same sharp tongue. As with Mairead, there is a deep religious commitment (she is also Catholic) which appears to grow as the demands of sustaining the momentum of the Peace Movement mount. She also has an infectious humour that lightens some of the solemnity that on occasion tends to overwhelm their rallies. She can take on a crowd of 20,000 and make it roar with laughter. She is perhaps less secure than Mairead, not always so sure what she believes, but strongly motivated to get on and get things done.

I arrived at her Belfast house to find her looking as if she had been in a car accident. Eyes glazed and wobbly at the knees, she was barely recognisable as the hearty, jokey woman she usually is. But she hadn't been in a car crash; she only had a hang-up. She felt guilty that Mairead found it easy to love everyone, and that she found it bloody difficult (especially when it came to the Provos). So through a friend she invited two Provo women to come round and talk: so that she could persuade them she did not really hate them but only wanted to change their minds. Their visit lasted a bare twenty minutes, and the last few minutes were spent outstretched on the floor with the women kicking her. She did not want to tell that to the Press because she was frightened she would not be able to control her emotions. She would only end up shouting that she did in fact hate the Provos—and what good would that do?

ALTHOUGH THESE TWO WOMEN have dominated the media coverage, there is in fact a third, equally important (some would say more important) member of the Peace People. Thirty-two years old, Ciaran McKeown is an ex-Irish Press journalist who approached Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan at the Belfast studios of the BBC and said he wanted to help. His grounding was in the Civil Rights Movement which he quit when he saw that it was moving towards violence. He spoke out at a meeting of the

People's Democracy at the end of 1968 against proposals for a march from Belfast to Londonderry. He said it had a real "danger of bringing out every sleeping bigot along the way." He was not supported and he left the movement. Certainly his political experience and wisdom have been an invaluable asset to the Peace Women. A good organiser, a clear and incisive formulator, he is the author of a minor *tour de force*, a pamphlet ("The Price of Peace") which sets out the main lines of the Peace Movement's hopes and ideals.

THE PEACE MOVEMENT after six months of intense work is now at a critical crossroads. Many wonder if it can sustain its initial high

enthusiasm and activity. But a word first about its history.

It began, in Mairead Corrigan's words, like this:

"On Wednesday, August 11, I tried to console my brother-in-law, Jackie Maguire, on the death of his three children, and said, 'Perhaps God has taken them for a purpose and some good will come out of their deaths.'

"Jackie replied that too many had died—'Like all the rest, their deaths will probably be a nine-day wonder.'

"Jackie was right that too many innocent people had died—and for what? I promised myself that I would do all in my power

to try to prevent even one more death and perhaps in some way Anne and Jackie might find a reason for the deaths of their three little children.

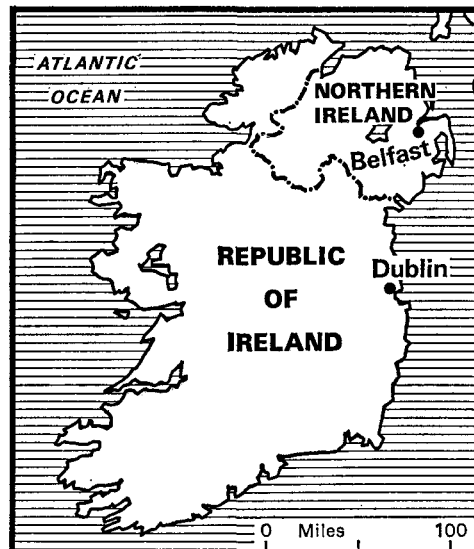
"Jackie Maguire gave me the opportunity when he condemned the IRA and all the violence to the press on Wednesday, and then I did the same on TV. Where to go from there, I did not know. . . .

"Then I heard that this lady, Betty Williams, had started collecting signatures and was going to organise a rally for the Saturday (14 August). I phoned to thank her and met her on Friday 13th just before the funerals of Joanne, John, and baby Andrew.

"The next day was the occasion of the first rally, with 10,000 or more joining to demonstrate for peace, with banners from Twinbrook and buses from the Shankill.

"Then on Sunday, 15 August, we began to get inundated with requests from TV and radio, and reporters from all over the world."

This promising start was built on sensibly and quickly. First, an emotional march of 10,000



mainly working-class Catholic and Protestant women into the Catholic Andersonstown and Falls Road neighbourhood. Outside St John the Baptist School, where the three children were mown down, the women prayed and sang hymns while a group of IRA youths jeered from a garage roof. Later petrol bombers tried to burn down Betty Williams' house; they were chased away by local men. This was followed the next week-end by a 25,000-strong march in Ormeau Park. The weekend after about the same number marched through the Loyalist working-class neighbourhood, the Shankill—Protestants poured out of their houses and embraced the marchers, Protestant church-bells rang. But on the way to the march 200 howling women and youths, sympathetic to the Provisionals, had set on some of the Peace Women. Several were kicked and dragged to the ground. Three youths dragged one young girl around a corner and urinated on her.

And on the same day a sympathy peace march in Dublin attracted 20,000 people, and there were smaller marches elsewhere in the Republic. The Peace Movement was well and truly launched.

In mid-September there was a spontaneous demonstration of Protestant housewives and shop assistants. A paramilitary group, the Ulster Defence Association, had hijacked and set on fire two buses. Thirty angry women blocked the road, stopping the paramilitary taxi-cabs from passing. Then another group of over 100 joined them for a spontaneous peace meeting in the road. They blew whistles to attract each other's attention—the Peace Women's answer to the IRA women who bang dust-bin lids to warn their men that Army patrols are approaching.

In early October the Peace Women were again back in the news with a meeting in Catholic Turf Lodge. It had been called by residents because a 13-year-old boy had been killed by a plastic bullet fired by the Army. Mairead and Betty had gone to the meeting in an attempt to calm it down and to try and re-channel high emotions. Although there were probably a majority in the audience sympathetic to what they had to say, the press dispatches focused on the anger of a group of Republican women in the front rows. When Mairead Corrigan tried to speak she was shouted down. Betty Williams was hit on the head and collapsed. They all had to take refuge in the sacristy of the Church for two hours before they could get away.

I have heard criticism of their decision to go to this kind of meeting ("it stirs up the hornets' nest"). For my own part I think they are right. Confrontation is both good psychology and good press relations. It demonstrates the tough rank-and-file of the Protestant and Catholic ghettos that the Peace Women are not exactly "softies." They will of course, never rival the real "hard men" or "hard women" of the Irish Isle, but undoubtedly over time this kind of tactic will undermine the narrow self-confidence of those who just "go along." Ciaran McKeown sums this argument up well when he says:

"... there is nothing passive about this pacifism. It is twice as active as para-militarism. It will work from morning to night, it will bow to no fear, nor even to grief, although it may feel these things very deeply indeed. All that is fundamentally needed to turn our community round from the Gadarene stampede to the cliff on to the road of creative harmony is for the truly gentle, strong people to step forward, to realise both their numerical and spiritual strength, and in moving forward together, to make it possible for those locked into the mental ghettos of fear and prejudice to slowly see that there is another way, that they need not kill or threaten, that they need not lead lives on the run from reality and from the warmth of friendship.

"So we will seek to encourage the gentle and reassure the violent weak—for there are no weaker or more mentally and emotionally vulnerable people than those who feel compelled to hide behind guns and bombs, and who need the noise of war to hide their dumbness...."

**B**ESIDES THESE well-publicised confrontations there has been a whole series of rallies that have passed uneventfully with large numbers participating. They have been held not only in the North, but in the Republic and mainland Britain: 5,000 in Downpatrick; 5,000 in Leeds; 25,000 in Londonderry; 15,000 in Trafalgar Square; 20,000 in Cork; 12,000 at the Boyne (to mention only some). Most of them hit the front page of at least three major newspapers. Often they were the lead-item on the BBC, RTE, or ITN news bulletins. The later rallies had the added appeal of Joan Baez's presence, and her American, almost diffident folk-singer style blends well with the Peace Women.

I have been to two: Trafalgar Square and the Boyne. But it was the latter that was the most moving, if only because I had a chance to see close up the mechanics of the operation. And formidable mechanics it is too—an exercise in "devolution" that makes the politicians with their close-knit bureaucratic empires look more irrelevant than they already are.

Each neighbourhood is responsible for organis-

ing its own buses. The rendezvous point is picked up from the newspaper or passed on by word-of-mouth. Four months after the first march everyone now knows what to do—get on your bus, take your sandwiches and thermos, and make sure you're at the departure point by 2.30 p.m.—which leaves the three Peace People-in-chief free to do the interviews and keep the publicity-machine ticking. Which is right, for without frequent appearance in the press, people will quickly assume they no longer exist—why else do the paras keep the bombs going off?

The buses themselves are splendid travelling islands of hope. I travelled the 100 miles from Belfast to the Boyne, just over the Irish border, with Mairead. Every time we passed a bus that had stopped she would leap out of the car, board the bus, shake everyone's hand, swop bits of information on her foreign travels with neighbourhood peace groups. The buses were unbelievably cold. It happened to be the coldest day for ten years and the frost was an inch thick on the trees and grass. I asked some of them what they did to keep warm: "singing" was the usual answer, but a busload of nuns actually told me they had "danced" (in the aisles, on the green-sward?). Needless to say, with our frequent stops we were among the last to arrive at the Boyne and everyone was all lined up. We had to walk past the length of the march with Mairead being mobbed by the marchers. Getting forward was very slow, and in the end she had to be firmly grabbed by Ciaran McKeown who propelled her to the front of the long line.

The march from our side, the North, was rather carefully timed to meet—down in the Boyne Valley where the Protestant King William III of England defeated the Irish in 1690—another march coming up from the Irish Republic. The two crowds swirled towards each other for emotional embraces. The Ulster column of the marchers were led by Catholic Andersonstown (the Provisional stronghold) and Shankill (its complement on the Protestant side). At the head of the Republic's columns it was Drogheda, Dublin, and the Reconciliation Ireland Programme of the American National Council of Churches. Joan Baez sang "*We Shall Overcome*" and "*The Lord is my Shepherd*." Betty Williams spoke of the need to trust in God; Ciaran McKeown of how "nothing is more political than an act of friendship"; and Mairead Corrigan movingly summed up the Peace Movement's message: "Let's say on the 6th December the Irish people

began a new battle. A battle to replace war with peace, hatred with love, anger with friendship, injustice with justice, people without homes with homes, unemployment with jobs. Let us dedicate ourselves to this new form of battle that can turn Ireland back into a land of saints and scholars."

THE PEACE MOVEMENT rarely speaks in more precise terms than these, which is both its strength and its weakness. Its strength because some simple eternal truths need in Ulster to be said again and again—that there can be no justice until there is peace. Its weakness because politicians, political activists, and journalists like to see a programme of "specifics" and, soon bored with admirable generalities, consciously or unconsciously seek to undermine the movement.

Indeed the hard question is: where do they go next, for the rally stage is now after a six-month run to all intents and purposes over. How do they stay in the public eye? For although the media coverage has been good, it is limited. Indeed I fear the Peace People tend to overrate the exposure they have had if only because Betty Williams can barely squeeze into her house for all the television cameras and tripods. They forget it's a rather small house and that a five-minute item on an off-peak TV programme for Spanish or Australian networks can take a gang of six technicians and half-a-day of your time. A look through the file of press clippings in the Chatham House library gives a more modest impression.

Most major newspapers in Britain, North America, and Europe have covered their main activities. But only rarely have they been on the front page, and feature articles number about two or three per paper at best. Even the Shankill March, perhaps the emotional high spot, was given only seven lines on the front page of the *Sunday Times*. *The Observer*, doing a little better, gave it two short columns. But even to sustain that level of media interest is going to be well-nigh impossible. Now that the early emotions of rally excitement are over, the press will tend to drift away. *The Guardian's* Belfast correspondent, Derek Brown, a dedicated and hard-working journalist, told me that the reason why he led (on the day of the highly successful and well-attended Boyne march) with the Londonderry bombings and only gave four lines at the very bottom to the march was that that was "what he guessed would most interest his readers. . . ."

Most political observers I talked to consider it

“inevitable” that the Peace People will “fizzle out.” The sympathetic add that they have done a good job, and that they have laid the base for another peace movement at a later date at a more favourable stage of developments. I was also told how they had helped stimulate a greater use of the “confidential telephone”—a most useful weapon for gaining information that operates with only an impersonal tape-recorder at the other end. (The Provisional IRA has threatened to mutilate or murder any peace leaders who they decide are “informers.”) But sympathetic though these observers are, they feel the Peace People have inevitably lost the high ground and will be, come the spring, no longer a force to be reckoned with. One highly-placed observer (who was in a position to speak off-the-record for the powers at the top) told me that he thought they should “go political” and launch their own political party to fight at the March local elections. My response was that they would be eaten alive: Belfast’s politicians are worse than piranha fish. He did not deny it, but seemed to think this was a good way to go out. . . .

My own view is rather less apocalyptic. I think that, for all their “very Irish” problems, the Peace People have made the right decisions. They are turning the direction of their movement into the building and strengthening of local committees—trying to get peace groups to form across the divide and to work at the elementary level of a cup of tea, a chat, and “What can we do in our own neighbourhood?”. If I have any criticism, it is that they are not putting quite enough of their energies into this. They are still spending too much of their time on foreign trips. And although I understand the reason for this—to lift the horizons of Ulster’s appalling parochialism, and to raise money (not just hand-outs, but for investment too)—more time is needed at home for these local groups to work. The government’s intelligence services report that the groups are not really as active as the Peace People say they are.

**T**HIS is the long trail. But it could well work in a way these sympathetic but incorrigibly conventional political observers don’t expect—when the “enemy” and the forces of violence which they oppose makes some foolish mistake. I remember how Martin Luther King’s civil rights people used to muse about their own organisation’s inadequacies, and they always maintained

that it was the “enemy” who rescued them from the doldrums. There was either an arrest, or a bombing or some other savage and senseless act of retaliation. When this did not happen, King’s star waned—as during the forgotten Albany campaign in 1961 or even the Selma campaign. The campaign had begun to wind down; the demonstrations had become less well supported, less vigorous. And then, unexpectedly, Sheriff Clark unleashed his troopers at Pettus Bridge to give the marchers the most terrible beating they had ever had. This rejuvenated the determination of the activists and projected the cause straight on to Page-One headlines. Less than two weeks later President Johnson decided to put the Voting Rights bill before Congress.

Belfast should not find it difficult to sustain the sorrows of Peace.

At this point, however, the parallels with the US Civil Rights Movement become more complex. For Martin Luther King there were always easily defined targets—integrate the buses and the lunch counters, and give blacks the vote. And when King later moved on to broader questions like poverty and urban deprivation he lost speed, only to regain it when he switched to Viet Nam. Again, a straightforward issue with a simple aim: “Troops Out.”

But if the Peace People did pick the obvious target—Troops Out—they would grievously divide all their supporters. For all the evidence that Ulster might be better off with the troops out, I doubt if the Protestant wing of the Peace Movement is yet ready to receive that kind of message.

Yet there are ways that they can draw on the experience of King and so find the means to give their campaign substance and vitality. Martin Luther King was adept at finding micro-situations that represented macro-problems. He ran tightly-focused campaigns that highlighted the practice of a small town, but which had national consequences. In Montgomery, his first campaign, he led a boycott of the buses. For a whole year in that Alabama town no black rode the buses. In the end Montgomery’s city fathers caved in, and the buses were integrated—but so were they in hundreds of other towns, for the Supreme Court had ruled that Alabama’s state laws on bus-segregation were unconstitutional. On the Selma Campaign nine years later he organised the local blacks to register to vote in one little southern town. The crude machinations of Sheriff Clark and the local establishment to stop

blacks becoming an electoral force put this insignificant town on the world map. Every march, every murder, every beating became an item of news and in the end the President himself was forced to intervene. "What happened in Selma", said Lyndon Johnson in his address to Congress announcing his bill on voting rights, "is part of a far larger movement which reaches into every section and state of America. Their cause must be our cause too." And what nearly every conventional liberal politician had warned King was quite impossible became the law of the land.

DO THE PEACE PEOPLE have equally clearly defined local targets that they can use to dramatise a wider cause? I think they do.

There is the so-called Peace Line—a barbed-wire fence 20-feet high that divides the Protestant ghettos from the Catholic ones. Erected by the Army at the time of the mass rioting, it is a grim permanent reminder of the divided state of Ulster. The Peace Movement are talking about taking down the Peace Line in neighbourhoods where they have effective peace groups on either side of the line and across the line. Inevitably such a step would provoke the hostility of both the paramilitaries and the Army. The paramilitaries want it preserved because it serves the cause of tension and hostility. And the Army want it kept intact because their job is to maintain security. So it will be no easy job to get away with taking it down. But take it down they should, at least in the parts where their neighbourhood groups are strong, for nothing else would more vividly dramatise that the movement is a going concern at the ghetto roots where peace will in the final reckoning be made or unmade.

Another well-defined target would be the unbricking of the walled-up, abandoned houses on "the interface"—the streets that face each other across the Peace Line. The Peace Movement has already encouraged some local groups to do this, bringing back into use perfectly adequate houses, that were abandoned when fire-bombing by the opposing side made them too dangerous to inhabit. If they can resettle these with mixed populations who are prepared to sit tight even if intimidated, they will have struck a major blow against the brutality of the terrorist organisations.

And a campaign to integrate the schools? Is it possible to shame the Churches into dismantling this powerful symbol of disastrous communal division? They are going to try.

Desegregate the buses? No, fortunately this is not necessary. But although the rally period is over, the Peace People plan to keep the Peace buses rolling. The buses have built up a camaraderie and enthusiasm that is too precious to see wasted. So instead of shuttling people to marches they will be used every night to take Protestant families to visit Catholic families in a different part of town. These buses shunting around town will be a powerful advertisement for the vitality of the movement.

A last suggestion. The Peace Movement should use their public position to highlight some of the good things that happen in Ulster. The London visitor to Belfast is forcibly struck by just how much neighbourly "good works" are going on. Not just the anti-motorway campaigns of *Spokesong* fame, but play-groups, work co-ops, housing-aid centres, neighbourhood law firms, adventure playgrounds. A city that was almost derelict, with nothing of this kind of communal activity a bare five years ago, now has more vigour per square kilometre than any other city in Europe. Take away the violence and it might well become the envy of the outside world.

The Peace People should use their numerous contacts with the press to encourage journalists to focus on this unsung side of Belfast: it will lift the morale of those who struggle day and night to salvage creativity and companionship from the ruins of civil war, and it will again help to convince the vulnerable supporters of the paramilitaries that freedom and justice can indeed be won without the gun.

THESE, THEN, ARE SOME OF the directions in which the Peace People are going or could easily go. Indeed there is no shortage of *local* issues that can be used to focus attention, keep themselves in the public eye, and develop the moral commitment of their supporters. They must never forget that they are in the midst of a psychological war as much as a military one. The longer they can sustain their momentum, the more people they can keep ethically engaged and active, the more they confront (as they did in Turf Lodge) the emotional issues on which the paramilitaries thrive—the greater the chance there is of sympathisers withdrawing their traditional support from the paramilitaries.

The more the paramilitaries feel threatened, the more likely they are to make mistakes, and these could well play into the Peace People's

hands. And the more they can convince public opinion that they have the initiative, the more likely they are to be able to embarrass, even compel the politicians to agree to a political formula that will give everyone a fair share of a new deal.

A FINAL QUESTION, aimed not at the Peace People but at the British and Irish governments. Is there any way they can attempt to synchronise some response that will maximise the political advantage to be got out of what is very definitely a new and more positive climate? What are the present options?

First, the controversial issue of the withdrawal of the Army. The case against the Army is a powerful one. Should they be there at all? There can be no question that something had to be done on 14 August 1969. The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) decision to use Sterling sub-machine-guns and Browning machine-guns mounted on Shorland vehicles in an urban riot was only one of the more obvious signs that events were out of control. Left to itself the situation would have flared to appalling proportions.

Yet it is reasonable to ask whether troops were the right instrument for pacifying the conflict. Would it not have been better to have drafted in an emergency force of mainland police? At that time the Catholic rioters needed assurance they would not be attacked, and the Protestant rioters needed to be assured of law and order. A good police force would have provided both. And this would have been achieved without providing the symbol the IRA activists (who still did not have more than the odd gun) needed to persuade the Bogsiders and Falls Roaders that they were now "occupied" by a hateful British force of conquerors.

Now this is a hypothesis which cannot be proved either way. But one thing can be said with some certainty: the Army itself has been over the years of "occupation" a major provocative element. The fact is that an army force is too blunt an instrument for the delicate job of bringing peace to communities who live cheek by jowl with each other. It was not trained for urban neighbourhood policing. The Army, moreover, is a highly visible sign of a dominant British political presence. It works to stifle the opportunity for local dialogue. Above all, it "poisons" the atmosphere. In the densely populated urban landscape the might of the

Army appears to be everywhere. Armour, guns, and barbed wire become part of the local architecture. What should be alien creeps in and becomes everyday and acceptable. Violence blends into the bricks and mortar.

One role for the army and navy there legitimately might have been: to seal the border, and to patrol the seas; to stop the nefarious gun-running that made the present level of combat violence possible.

**B**UT ALL THIS IS HISTORY. The question now is: can the Army come out?—a question sharpened by the upwelling of support for peace that Mairead Corrigan and Betty Williams have successfully catalysed.

I found a number of varying schools of thought. But let me concentrate on the two major ones—the "ins" and the "outs." Conor Cruise O'Brien, at present the Irish Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, is one of the most lucid exponents of the "ins" case. His opinion counts for much in the Irish cabinet (and, probably, in the British Cabinet too). "If the British were to withdraw", as he told me in an interview for ENCOUNTER, "with no assurance of stable agreement between the two communities, there could be another Lebanon in the North, and it would be bound to spill over into the South." That is the essence of his position.

Whatever criticism he has of past tactics (and he has many, not least the counterproductive way internment was introduced), O'Brien sees the need for more of the same for the present: a continued British presence and an acceptance that the existing level of violence is going to go on for a long time. When one asks how long is a long time, a shrug is the answer. (But one of his close Dublin associates predicted "another seven years.") He believes that in the end some kind of devolved relationship—based on power-sharing, and working within UK structures—will come to be accepted. "While waiting for a consensus to emerge everyone must sit tight", he says. Essentially O'Brien's policy is one of non-capitulation to the Provisionals. Any concession would only encourage them to raise their sights to their ultimate goal—"a united Ireland." The Peace People's movement, seen from the perspective of this kind of thinking, is but a useful stepping-stone to the day, yet long off, when an overwhelming majority say "*enough is enough*"

and the Provisionals no longer have a sea in which to swim.

The "Army-Out" viewpoint tends to blur with the "independent Ulster" advocate. So let me look at these separately, and then together.

The Army-Out argument is rooted in the recognition that the presence of the British Army has produced an atmosphere in which all questions (social, economic, political) are presumed to have a military dimension. Too many people now can only think of conflict-resolution by military means, and this inevitably stifles normal political dialogue and community interaction. There is also the real danger that continued military presence will lead not to a gradual petering out of violence but to a renewed flare-up. 1976, after all, saw more killings and bombings than any year since the large-scale rioting of 1972. Father Des Wilson (the pacifist priest whose presence has dominated Ballymurphy, the depressed Catholic housing estate) worries that the young boys, 14 or 15, whose conscious life has seen only the Troubles, will soon, not unlike Japanese suicide pilots, begin to hurl themselves against the troops. "You cannot compare their bitterness with the older generation", he says. "It's of a different kind." He believes that the sooner the Army announce they are indeed coming out the better, although he is careful to caution that the withdrawal process would have to be staged over a number of years.

The call for Ulster's independence has been floated before, not least in the destructive garb of a Protestant *UDI*, and is now attracting a wide measure of support. It first publicly surfaced in early November when nine of Northern Ireland's Protestant paramilitary groups announced at a press conference that they wanted an Independent Northern Ireland with a parliament of 100 members. British withdrawal would, they said, take place over the next ten years. They suggested that an Independent Ulster would be governed with Catholic participation in the Cabinet, *i.e.* a kind of power-sharing. The debate broadened when the Catholic Social Democrats, at their annual SDLP conference in early December, passed a resolution to study the question. (I should add here that main-line politicians like Gerry Fitt, Brian Faulkner, Conor Cruise O'Brien, and the British policy-makers all share an instinctive hostility to the idea.)

What are its virtues? It puts the Protestants in charge but without a British army to lean on. It assumes that, once the possibility of reunifi-

cation with Ireland is one further step removed Catholics will give up hankering for a large "Irish dimension" and will throw in their lot with the attempt to make their own part of the country work. And it assumes that without the prop of British or Irish involvement the rival Ulster communities will quickly realise that they have to live with each other and that no one is going to rescue them from their own mistakes. (No one, for that matter, will continue to pay UK dole money to locally "unemployed" paramilitary characters.) Some go further and say that, after eight years of upheaval the Northern Irish people have developed a separate identity and that this can be reinterpreted as something of a virtue, rather than decried as a curse. "We have all suffered together. . . ." *etc.* The argument gains added appeal if one makes the assumptions (a) that an independent Ulster would "enter Europe" and subscribe to the EEC rules on democracy and human rights, and (b) that any tendency to backslide could be countered as it successfully was in post-revolutionary Portugal, by the bait of foreign aid (*i.e.* West German money).

**T**HE ARGUMENT AGAINST ALL THIS is strong: that the Provos might declare an initial truce, but would soon restart the civil war, convinced that without the British Army to stop them a united Ireland would be so much easier to attain. It would be impossible for the authorities to crack down on them in the way the Eire government is doing successfully; this would only lead, in a heterogeneous society, to the old problem of Catholic reaction and rank-closing. A Lebanon would flare. . . .

But would it? Lebanon is not really an exact parallel, for all Dr Conor Cruise O'Brien's use of it. An independent Ulster would be different in three ways. It could be established in an atmosphere of good-will on both sides, particularly if the Peace People take up its cause and also make it their own. (Perhaps this is also one of the "easily-defined targets" they need to sustain themselves.) It would be coming after seven years of violence which has left the vast majority of people sick of it. The notorious sea that the paramilitary groups swim in would dry up significantly. There is not the heavy weaponry in Ulster that caused so much destruction in Lebanon. And, finally, there would not be outside forces supplying and backing the conflicting sides as there was in

the Lebanon. One thing the Irish and British governments might agree on: to patrol with an EEC force the Irish side of the border and thus stop the Provos' link with their friends and suppliers down South.

The arguments for British Withdrawal and for Independence can be taken separately or together. Together they give added attraction to the independence idea. But even withdrawal on its own, merely as a tactic to reduce the level of violence and to force the communities to realise that they have to find a *modus vivendi* within the United Kingdom, also appears to be appealing. It is difficult to be hard and fast about the withdrawal argument. I have presented as strong a case as I think can be made for it. But I see the risks and dangers, and don't at all wish to appear too convincing. Could an experiment be in order? Why don't the British, perhaps with wonted secrecy, slowly withdraw the troops from one of

the Catholic areas where the Peace Movement is most active and has most support? It would be interesting and valuable to see if, as the military pressure is *reduced*, the identity with the Peace People *increased*. If this turned out to be true, there would be a strong case for reducing troop levels in a further area and even for withdrawing troops to barracks. In the end, however, troops can only be finally removed from Ulster soil when the people have decided clearly and openly that they are ready to govern and be governed, with rights and obligations.

THE PEACE PEOPLE have brought a glimmer of hope to Ulster. They have shown, as Martin Luther King used to say, "that peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek but a means by which we arrive at that goal." The first step has been taken. The real march to peace must now begin.

## The William Trevor Poem

How are you off for sex  
and that class of thing?  
Let me warn you against the flex,  
it's a type of electric string.

Now would you care to imbibe?  
The blacks don't understand stout  
and potations of that tribe  
or pushing the boat out.

Inside the bicycle shed  
a certain suggestion was made,  
you wouldn't believe what was said  
in the way of denoting a spade,

and that variety of talk  
is insulting a decent man;  
you want to take care where you walk,  
hurry on if you can,

some females are out to tempt,  
and adopt an abandoned pose,  
but remember they're not exempt  
from disease, in their shameless clothes.

You should lead a healthy life  
and keep your thoughts on the shelf  
or before you can say knife  
you'll be betraying yourself.

Gavin Ewart

# Who's Left, What's Right

WE HARDLY EVER intend to be as topical and up-to-minute as sometimes the latest headlines and newspaper dispatches inadvertently make us out to be. Our inquiry into changing ideological attitudes was, we thought, a matter of the long perspective; and in the preface to the first part of the Symposium we reflected on that fateful misunderstanding about Left and Right which originated centuries ago in the curious seating arrangements of the French Revolutionary Convention.

Still, fast-moving twentieth-century history brings us up to date with a jolt. What we were dealing with in the large movements of concepts and clichés in the Western mind was already a life-and-death issue in faraway continents. Last month an English correspondent, resident in Peking, sent the following report to the *Daily Telegraph* in London:

Chairman Hua Kuo-Teng's plans for wiping out radical influences and boosting prosperity form a moderate manifesto. But the term "moderate" as used by foreigners writing about China irritates Hua and other leaders to whom it is applied. Chinese officials have told foreigners that they think "moderate" means soft or vacillating while "radical" means Leftist and progressive. Clearly this is not the way they wish things to be seen. The radicals, Hua told the agricultural delegates, plotted a Rightist, anti-Communist coup. "What 'Leftist'? What 'radicals'?" he demanded. "They could not have pursued a line further to the Right."

So the ultra-Maoists are now reactionaries and Hua is the true voice of the Left. At a Peking photographic exhibition the four purged radicals have been erased from a big picture of leaders standing beside Mao's body. Faint ghostly images are all that can be seen in the places where they stood. Even Chiang Ching's wreath to her husband has been carefully rubbed out. . . ."

"What radicals?" indeed.

Meanwhile, back on the home front, there was speculation about who, now that the era of Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon (which witnessed a dramatic shift to militancy on the part of Britain's trade-unionists) was drawing to a close, would inherit the mantle of the Left. It looked, according to informed political columnists, as if it would be a Welshman named Morse Evans. Among his solid support on the Left were the three militant leaders of the Mine Workers (who were instrumental in bringing down the Heath Government with their strike in the winter of 1973). Here is one reporter's

vignettes of the *dramatis personae* making their ideological sounds on the current stage. Of Lawrence Daly and Michael McGahey (the Communist vice-President of the Miners' Union), Graham Turner writes (*Sunday Telegraph*, 16 January):

"McGahey's and Daly's fathers were both hard-line Stalinists and, when Daly left the Communist Party and criticised Russia for her attack on Czechoslovakia, his father upbraided him vigorously. He had never, he said, expected to hear a son of his speaking like that. . . ."

What Leftists indeed! As for his presumed successor, Mr Arthur Scargill, the Yorkshire Miners' president:

"Scargill, too, used to be a member of the Communist Party and, according to one of his more cynical colleagues on the N.U.M. executive, left it only because the Russians moved Stalin out of Lenin's tomb. . . ."

As for Joe Gormley, at the moment the top man in the Miners' Union, the cynicism—or perhaps the ideological ambivalence we have been pondering—has touched him to the extent that his precept is now: "Right and Left are in the Eye of the Beholder." He tells the story about a visit to Romania with a prominent Labour Left-winger who proceeded to introduce him to President Ceausescu as an "extreme Right-wing Socialist."

"Gormley managed to contain himself at the time, but on the flight home he made it clear what he would do if such a thing ever happened again. He added pointedly that he'd noticed the Left-winger in question had a house for sale with a reserve price of £125,000 on it, and that although he'd spent his whole life fighting for the miners he hadn't managed to accumulate such a fortune. . . ."

After such knowledge what forgiveness? Is there, then, new hope coming with a new leader?

"Morse Evans does not give the impression of a man of passionate convictions. He describes himself as a Left-winger—a phrase so obligatory in the trade union movement as to mean nothing, since everyone moves the centre to suit himself. . . ."

So this is what the firm fixities of 1789 have come down to—a free-for-all in the theatre of politics? Now read on.

M.J.L.

## David Holden<sup>1</sup>

SURELY everything depends on context? I can't think of any theoretical definition of "Left" and "Right", of "liberal" or "conservative", that suits all permutations of those words. Their meanings are in a constant process of change both in time and place. So probably the best role we can assign to them is that of convenient labels among friends—i.e., provided the people using them have some common ground of belief, language or experience the words may have a rough utility as identifying certain recognised attitudes in equally recognised situations.

Even then there is plenty of room for misunderstanding. It's clear that by any logical definition a "conservationist" must share some ground with a "conservative." But as a matter of social or political practice the nature of his "conservatism" depends on what he wants to conserve—and where. If it is a fox he is probably—in Britain, anyway—a true-blue Tory. If it is the atmosphere, the environment, or Venice, he probably thinks of himself as a liberal. If it is "working-class values" he probably belongs to the romantic "New Left" (and there's another can of worms).

But in spite of such obvious possibilities for confusion most of us can just about sort out categories like these provided we share some of the same assumptions. The real difficulties arise when the assumptions are not shared—when the context on either side is unfamiliar. Here, the world is not so much our oyster as our pitfall; and in spite of the speed and variety of modern global communications, the problems seem to me to be growing. Indeed, the technical excellence of communications today has in some ways compounded the difficulties. As the hail of news and views from the world becomes ever more instant and voluminous, the temptation to reduce it to largely inappropriate labels and clichés becomes steadily less resistible. They are the simplest—often the only—means to hand of imposing some apparent order on an otherwise unassimilable flux.

AS A FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT I have been depressingly aware for years that this is the special blight of my trade. By its nature, it must use the concepts of one culture to try to describe or analyse the realities of another. Combined with the normal pressures of journalistic time and space this too often results in the promotion and consolidation of misleading stereotypes.

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Take, for example, the recent civil war in Lebanon. Most reporters there felt compelled to describe the combatants in terms that were at least vaguely familiar to their readers. So the fighters became "rightists" and "leftists" or "Christians" and "Muslims" or—in a desperate attempt at greater precision—"Christian-rightists" and "Muslim-leftists." I hope and believe that most reporters were aware of the inadequacy of such labels: but what were they to do? The words don't exist to describe succinctly the peculiar and often contradictory amalgam of confessional faith, clan loyalty, political ideology and, above all, sheer expediency that actually lurked within the stereotypes.

Was the notorious Kemal Jumblatt, for instance, truly a "Muslim-leftist" as he was so often described? Well, yes, up to a point, Lord Copper.

But so, presumably, were the Syrian Ba'ath Socialists against whom he was supposed to be fighting. So it was necessary to look beyond the customary description for an explanation of his position—and the truth was, surely, that it derived largely from his hereditary role as a chieftain of the Druze. That not only made him a very eccentric Muslim but also—more importantly—excluded him from power, because under the customary confessional balance maintained in Lebanese politics there was no way for a Druze to attain one of the major offices of state. Hence Jumblatt's highly individual "leftism"—the natural resort of a man to whom power could only come through the destruction of the *status quo*. In this light, his common description as a "Muslim-leftist" actually described nothing: it was irrelevant to the mainsprings of his actions.

Similar cautionary lessons could be drawn from many places, especially in the so-called "Third World" (yet another label that needs to be treated with care). Is Mrs Gandhi "leftist" because she talks about socialism, has a friendship treaty with Russia, and enjoys the confidence of Mr Michael Foot? or "rightist" because she locks up trade unionists, promotes the career of her stridently anti-communist son, and has won the approval of Mr Eldon Griffiths?

Is President Neto of Angola a prisoner of Moscow and its Cuban minions? or a tool of the American oil company that supplies most of his money? Is President Sadat more "liberal" than the late President Nasser because he has released most of Egypt's political prisoners and lifted many state restrictions on political and economic activity? or more "conservative" because he has promoted free enterprise, banned alcohol, and thrown himself, diplomatically speaking, into the arms of Washington? And where on earth—or in heaven—do we place someone like the Shah

of Iran, who claims with some justice to represent no less than a monarchical revolution?

Ideally, we ought simply to throw all the labels away and accept that each culture, each régime, each situation is *sui generis*, with its own context and its own imperatives. Inevitably, these interact with the context and imperatives of others but they rarely, if ever, correspond with them. In so far as universal labels imply correspondence—as they usually do—they are bound to be misleading. But the world is not an ideal place and I dare say we shall all go on with our labels regardless, if only because we shall feel so horribly lost without them. So what else is new?

## George Urban<sup>2</sup>

THE NOTION of a Left/Right dichotomy has a pleasing symmetry about it. That should not blind us to the fact that, as far as the moderate Left and the moderate Right are concerned, the dichotomy has ceased to exist. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the ground-rules supporting it have been “betrayed” (in the sense of Julien Benda); for the erosion has been cultural and intellectual (I’m almost tempted to say spiritual), though it has not been that alone.

Our expanding public conscience, expressed in the institutions of the Welfare State, has vastly increased the number of socially significant but culturally “banalistic” problems which claim, and rightly claim, to be heard in public discussion. The deliberation and legislative enactment of policies revolving around health care, old age, food subsidies, unemployment benefits, pay differentials and the like have a high priority on our purses and our attention. And so they ought.

But when issues of this kind are elevated from the cellar to the pinnacle of public consciousness; when they set the tone and determine the values of a society’s whole social and cultural climate; when the menial is lifted to the level of principle, and the corridors of power, as well as the halls of the universities and the marketplace, reverberate to the sound of what is servile, or ancillary, or transitory, and deserving to be aired with nothing so much as a proper sense of embarrassment—then we have reason to fear that the socio-cultural character of Western society as we have known it is damaged at its roots. Left and Right share responsibility for having done violence to a tacit order of intellectual priorities which cohesive societies have sustained throughout history, and for thus inviting upon us and surrendering to the related

barbarisms of historical amnesia and the creeping growth of triviality. The Left because it set it in motion, the Right because it moved in step with it—even if slow-time step.

The scale and novelty of this debasement of our socio-cultural environment is well known but seldom well understood. Whether we think (and I am taking highly random examples) of St Augustine’s ideal of a just society in the sense of “true righteousness” under God—or Condorcet’s notion of the perfectibility of man guided by science—or John Stuart Mill’s idea of happiness as more truly vested in “a superior being” than in one of an “inferior type”—or Croce’s insistence that the self-conscious aspiration for freedom as a fundamental good assumes the existence of an élite band of keepers of the patrimony of our civilisation—in all these cases the desirable ends of human life and achievement were set beyond the mere satisfaction of creature needs and comforts. Not because 4th-century divines, 18th-century peasants, or 19th-century labourers were less affected by the frustrations and miseries of the human condition than are their successors at the conveyor belt in 20th-century Britain—but because, throughout history, men appear to have been informed by an uncannily consistent realisation that the shortest cut to the attainment of even mundane results lies through setting one’s sights on superior targets.

This, in one sense, is what religions, ideologies, national morale, and political will are about. And this is where the clerisy of Western societies, both of the moderate Left and the moderate Right, has betrayed its trust. It has failed to give us a worthwhile interpretation of human experience in the 20th century. It has provided no impelling vision of where we are going. It has offered no resistance to a psychological undertow in our society that pulls against every form of excellence. It has corrupted the very language of political discourse. Its optimism that social engineering and economic manipulation can answer the needs of our time is the principal cause of my pessimism.

A. N. Whitehead observed in one of his late writings that most of the limitations on human freedom are not man-made but inhere in the massive habits of physical nature: cold, hunger, disease, accident, death. “Prometheus did not bring mankind freedom of the press. He procured fire, which obediently to human purpose cooks and gives warmth.”

Maybe so, but if the utilitarian arts of cooking and keeping warm occupy the whole clerisy of our society, who is left to mind the fires of a worth-while polity—whether of the Left or the Right?

<sup>2</sup> GEORGE URBAN is a journalist and writer on contemporary history. He is editor and co-author of *Détente* (Temple Smith, 1976), *Toynbee on Toynbee* (1974), and *Can We Survive Our Future?* (1972).

## Constantine FitzGibbon<sup>3</sup>

AS HEADS ROLLED in the *place de la Révolution*, there was much shifting into dead men's seats in the revolutionary National Assembly. Danton, of all people, was on the extreme right for a little time before he was himself arrested and beheaded by Robespierre, the dictator thenceforth. Thus almost from their birth the terms "Left" and "Right" became almost meaningless. Nowhere more so than here in Ireland.

In 1796, when the French were on the sea though they failed to land in Bantry Bay, their principal Irish adviser was Wolfe Tone, generally regarded to this day as one of the great Irish patriots. He was born a Protestant—in his "autobiography" he claims that he never knew a single Roman Catholic—but by 1796 had passed through Jacobinism and was an atheist. Yet the simpler Irish believed that he, and the Jacobin-officered French army, were coming not merely to kick out the English but also to restore the Roman Catholic faith in Ireland, after doing their best to destroy it by loot and murder of the priesthood in France. We are more, but not very much more, sophisticated today.

When Brendan Behan was interned (by the de Valera government) as a member of the then and now illegal IRA, he asked what in Irish political terms is a perfectly rational question: "When do we split?" He was not answered until 1972, when the Provisionals broke away from the Officials. The Officials were and are Marxist—principally Moscow-dominated. Both branches are theoretically dedicated to the expulsion of the British from Northern Ireland in the interest of the Roman Catholic minority, approximately one-third of the population of that province. The Officials and the Provos have murdered one another, and there has been a certain amount of passage between them. This has not prevented the Communist apparatus from adopting its usual tactics these days of fighting by proxy while simultaneously infiltrating its rivals. In general it is the Provos who do the killing and bombing, while the Officials keep their cadres so far as they can intact. Yet this has not stopped the Provos from accepting weapons from the Russians, usually *via* one of Moscow's client states such as Libya, or buying them from Communist organisations with American dollars, given by American-Irishmen usually for "relief." It may be assumed that when the British depart, there will be not only a civil war between the

Protestants and the Catholics (there is considerable evidence that the Protestant extremist organisations have also received Soviet arms) but also between the Provos and the Officials. That the Soviets have the maximum interest in causing trouble in the North, and thus weakening England, and the minimum interest in Irish patriotism save in so far as it forwards their principal aim, goes without saying. And as for the religious context, Marxist atheists—that is to say, the Officials—have as little interest as had Wolfe Tone and his Jacobins.

Thus, in our semi-civil war now in its seventh year, the concepts of "Right" and "Left" are irrelevant. In the Republic, they are almost equally so. The publicists and the politicians mouth clichés, in which they scarcely believe any longer, about a "United Ireland." Yet they dread having the Northern situation handed over to them by the British. And the IRA, both branches, is almost universally unpopular though feared. The murder of the British ambassador last summer was regarded with shame, even guilt, by the overwhelming majority of the people of Ireland.

Ireland is (in part, and not merely geographically) an "ex-colony." It has become more, not less, of colonial status within the past few years. Home Rule, as granted to the Six Counties of Ulster in 1921, was rescinded with the abolition of their elected chamber, Stormont, and the subsequent imposition of direct rule from Westminster. To be "on the Left" in Ulster had become a denial of one-man-one-vote democracy, since the Unionists overwhelmingly voted "Right", and to achieve the fashionable (if meaningless) "power-sharing" in that province of the United Kingdom, it would have been necessary to give the Roman Catholic minority one-man-two-votes at least, for a considerable number of Catholics are also Unionists, as they were (in what is now the Republic) before 1917 or thereabouts. Yet because they are a colonial people, and because the Moscow government has a policy of supporting all anti-colonial aspirations (except within the Russian Empire), they have tried with some success to make these current Troubles appear at least revolutionary.

The Republic is economically, and even more so culturally, tied to Britain. This economic tie was, if anything, reinforced by Ireland's membership of the EEC on Britain's coat-tails. Culturally it has been so for many years, with the failure to re-introduce the Irish language as the language of the people. Yet even forgetting Marxism, the swing to the Left in Britain in the years since 1945 (now apparently reversed) has had little influence in Ireland. The Irish Labour Party, although it is in government as the junior member of a coalition

<sup>3</sup> CONSTANTINE FITZGIBBON is a novelist, biographer, and historian. His most recent book is *Secret Intelligence in the Twentieth Century* (Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1976).

(and it too has its infiltrated Marxists), is very much a minority party and likely to become more so. The Irish nationalised a great deal of their services long ago, and the result has not been altogether happy. If State Capitalism is "Left", it is neither successful nor particularly popular in Ireland. As for egalitarianism, save perhaps in the industrial areas of the East, it has little appeal in a country where class distinction quite lacks the English emotional impact, since an Irishman already regards himself as good as the next fellow. What "class" there was largely ended with British rule and the departure of most English landlords, resulting far more from the Land War of the last century ("No rent!") than from ideological activism. Nor has the power of the Church, as a rallying point, retained its significance. If at one time, in the '20s and '30s, powerful Bishops could in some measure overawe government, this was in large measure defeated by the fight of such liberals as Sean O'Faolain to abolish clerical censorship. That fight was won, conclusively, twenty years ago.

Nor can it be correctly called a fight between Left and Right, for William Butler Yeats was one of the leaders in the struggle against obfuscation, and it has become fashionable among the intellectualoids to call him a "fascist." (Of course he was no more a fascist than was T. S. Eliot. Like, perhaps, most great artists he preferred freedom and order, and cared little for politics.) Sean O'Casey's fight too, was primarily against religious censorship; and when the Archbishop of Dublin successfully forbade the production of one of his plays at the Abbey Theatre, he did not engage in political activity but simply emigrated from what he regarded as a benighted country. He called himself a "Communist", but this was less due to any study of Marxism-Leninism than to an almost Christian emotion for the victims of extreme poverty whom he had known intimately in his Dublin youth.

Indeed what might be called "Leftism" in Ireland—anti-colonialism and, later, a mild anti-clericalism—has been basically transcended (save in Ulster). Important issues in the Irish context—e.g. birth control, divorce, national poverty—can be espoused by people who are entirely in favour of free capitalist enterprise or a mixed half-socialised economy. Words, even in wordy Ireland, are becoming more precise.

## Robert Conquest<sup>4</sup>

THAT TWO OF THE LEADING intellectual magazines in the West, *Commentary* in New York and *ENCOUNTER* here, have been conducting broad symposia on this subject is only one of many recent indications that conservatism may

be an idea whose time has come.

Conservatism—the sort of conservatism I trust we are discussing—is not a more or less right-wing version of modern state-worship combined with the acceptance of most of the "progressive" moral package. It is a return to the traditional liberties, and the traditional self-restraints which accompany all real liberty. The enormous effect of Solzhenitsyn's BBC television interview was, one would think, not due to his particular points, but to the insistence on profound moral principle which he so unashamedly, and with such authority, put to our people. The chord he struck was that of a nation sick at heart, lost in a wilderness of greed and lies, told that its real convictions are not, after all, illiterate obscurantism.

For, of course, you *can* put the clock back. It has been done before.

The whole principle of our culture, since Mercian times, has rested on the state being strong and confident, but restrained in the exercise of its power. It put down lawlessness, but did not intrude, except as an arbiter, into the sphere of the individual and the community. The rulers who have come down as strong and effective were those like Edward I, Edward III, and Elizabeth I, who observed these limitations. The failures were men like Edward II, Richard II, and James II, who tried to rule against the consensus, and were overthrown by constitutional counter-revolutions.

From the late 1950s there was little to choose between the two British political parties. If anything Labour was the sounder, particularly on money. The Conservatives, abandoning anything recognisable as conservatism, became managerialist *étatistes*, intruders of the executive power into spheres where it was not wanted; and (as we now know) it was thoroughly incompetent.

Since the death of Hugh Gaitskell, Labour has progressively fallen to pieces. And nothing to match the Campaign for Democratic Socialism, which fought off the lunatic left takeover attempt of earlier days has emerged. Tiny troops of Trotskyites now seize the constituencies. The NEC demands the ruin of the economy, at the same time entertaining "comradely" delegations from a Party which ruthlessly suppresses democratic socialists—thus indicating the type of society these villains, or possibly cretins, find admirable.

In a politically healthy period both parties in

<sup>4</sup> ROBERT CONQUEST is a poet and an historian of Russian affairs. His best-known book is perhaps *The Great Terror* (1968). He is currently a Visiting Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington.

the State have shown themselves patriotic, responsible, and concerned to preserve the traditional rights of the Briton. In those circumstances one was able to vote on genuine policy choices—in favour of the Health Service, against the Nationalisation of Steel, and so on. Then came a time when both parties were going downhill. In many constituencies the choice was between a Conservative managerial whizz-kid and a Labour sociology lecturer; and the honest citizen had little option but to abstain. Even then the leaderships, while in their different days inclined to creeping despotism and to economically ruinous policies, remained committed in principle at least to democracy and to the Western alliance. Now, the Labour leadership is *still* sound in principle: the fish, contrary to the proverb, has begun to stink at the tail, and they cannot control the Party without abject concessions to tyranny (*e.g.*, the recent attempt to set up a dockers' dictatorship in the coastal areas).

Many who should be fighting back have given up the struggle and retired to Brussels and elsewhere. It may be that, all the same, Labour will eventually re-emerge as a national party worthy of the name. Meanwhile one has no choice but to turn to the Conservatives.

And here, fortunately, a different transformation has taken place. The "modern" and "technocratic" anti-traditionalist leadership luckily showed itself to be no good even by its own standards. When an efficiency expert ruins the economy and inaugurates bureaucratic streamlining which demonstrably costs more and works worse than before, even those who swallowed his flashy drivel may begin to feel that traditionalism is not only nicer, but also wiser. The reconservatising of the Conservative Party could not have come at a better time. It means that democrats and patriots, lovers of liberty and enemies of bankruptcy once again have somewhere to go.

## Grievous Sources of Puzzlement

*An Historical Perspective—By J. L. TALMON<sup>5</sup>*

RIGHT AND LEFT, reactionary and progressive, conservative and liberal, Communist and Fascist—are these contradictory attitudes towards an abiding objective reality, or only emotive expressions? To what extent have they been subjected to dialectical development, change, and even erosion, under the impact of circumstances and as the result of men becoming conscious of and hypnotised by them, and thus compulsively prone or selfishly interested to employ them as rationalisations and propagandist weapons? Have they any objective validity still today, and in what sense and form?

From the generic as well as the substantive point of view, there were two shibboleths for the distinction between Right and Left at the turn of the 18th century, the time of the emergence of all modern ideologies: (1) the conception of human nature and (2) idea of the universe. In theological or metaphysical language, the reactionaries of the Right held fast to the notion of original sin. Men were born evil and weak, had to be curbed, held in check, and guided by a higher authority such as God, the Church, tradition, ancient institutions, and certain social classes especially equipped and trained for the task. It was dangerous to

society and bad for men themselves to give human ignorance, selfishness, indolence and arbitrariness free rein.

The Progressives proclaimed man to be born good: a rational, teachable, perfectible, sociable creature, or at the very least a *tabula rasa* upon which education and social conditions could leave an effective, lasting and, when rightly handled, a wholly beneficial imprint. Men therefore should be allowed every freedom to express themselves, to try out all possible kinds of experiments of living.

The assumption that the world was finite, and that the bounties of nature were limited, and that their equal distribution would keep all in utter misery and barbarism, sustained the view (which Heinrich Treitschke still advocated in the late 19th century) that in order to maintain civilization, there was no escape from having the many underprivileged toil for the privileged few so that the latter would be enabled to cultivate samples of gracious living, promote the sciences and the arts and devote themselves to the task of governing and protecting the general populace.

THE CONVERGENCE OF THE IDEAS of the French and the Industrial Revolutions brought about the marriage of two notions of the "rights of man": the belief in the unlimited power of human ingenuity and the effort to extract from nature

<sup>5</sup> J. L. TALMON is Professor of Modern History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His books include the forthcoming *Origins of Ideological Polarization in the 20th Century* (Secker & Warburg)

inexhaustible supplies for universal distribution; and, more than that, for the enhancement of the scope, the range and the dignity of all our lives. Infinite progress in that direction came to be considered as the natural and preordained course of future history. The reality of "poverty in the midst of plenty" appeared therefore all the more revolting and intolerable. The opposition to the religion of progress could only be prompted by "selfish interests", upholding inherited privilege, fostering hoary prejudices and superstitious beliefs, which had made the masses yield to exploitation and oppression.

THE ISSUE WAS TRANSPOSED to a different plane, once the forces ranged against the feudal-clerical Establishment, *i.e.* the Third Estate, broke up into the two antagonistic tendencies: "bourgeois-liberal ideology" and the "proletarian" aspiration for the emancipation of the working classes. Members of the self-assured middle class interpreted untrammelled individual liberty as the unhampered freedom to express themselves in a competitive society. The deprived desired their formal freedom to be made real by social-economic security. Both regarded property as the test case, since the possession of it was the guarantee of genuine independence also in other spheres, such as political rights and intellectual freedom, whereas the absence of it made these entirely illusory. The issue was all-important from the point of view of the postulate of Equality.

Inherited economic inequality was bringing back with a vengeance the division of society into those "born to be served" and those who were to serve. But the demand for "social-economic security to be provided by society" was threatening to restore, if in a different form, an authoritarian centralised régime, made the more powerful by the possession and control of all national resources. This also revived the question of human nature and of the structure of society, and even to some extent of the universe itself. Was not provision from above calculated to stunt human energy and initiative, and therefore to reduce the production of the good things to be shared out, and to cause thus a general lowering of standards? The arrival of the masses also conjured up the spectre of the tyranny of "ignorant majorities" and of the strangulation of individual non-conformist originality. While the irresistible advance of industry was indeed increasing the means to satisfy human needs, the equally objectively inevitable concentration of industrial production seemed to be reducing the men employed in it to soulless cogs.

THERE WAS THE INTENSE DESIRE to do justice to these contradictory urges and aspirations; for liberty and equality, general abundance and

personal worth, bigness and individual self-expression. Brought up on Messianic expectations of society, after they had lost faith in reward and punishment by providential transcendental justice, men were unable to resign themselves to the fact that the apparent rationality, harmony, and cohesion prevailing in Nature could not be similarly realised one fine day in the social order. These antinomies gave rise to great and familiar theories—the impulses of which were certainly "progressive" and "leftist", but the consequences of which looked menacingly rightist and reactionary. The dream of reconciling liberty with equality was to come to fruition in Universal Unanimity: this would ensure both, since all would freely and equally desire the very same things. The indispensable conditions for the realisation of such a unanimity were proper social-economic arrangements—the "community of all goods"—and total self-identification with the appropriate *Weltanschauung*. The task of realisation was reserved for an élitist vanguard of the enlightened and the courageous, provided with the unerring historic insights and acting on the assumption that there was a human nature which (when liberated from alienation, economic bondage and spiritual tutelage, and suitably manipulated) was destined to adjust itself to the collective pattern. It was the right and duty of the pioneering minority—deriving its mandate from Historic Inevitability and the true inner, albeit not yet quite awakened and articulate wishes of the People—to hasten that irresistible march towards the salvationist dénouement with all means at their disposal, including violent and coercive measures.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF free hereditary property, with the privileges attending upon it as the motor of true human progress, as well as the conception of a special right and vocation of the "alienated" chosen groups to build a new society from which they would no longer be banished—both taught, each in its own way, the excellence of man's nature when nurtured by the right kind of liberty. Their respective upholders came, however, to be permeated by a strong distrust of Man. Those looking to a harmony of interests in a rational world, guided by an invisible, benevolent hand—as well as those believing in a coherent and well-organised social order maintained and regulated by sustained conscious effort—grew acutely worried by the obstacles presented by the recalcitrance of men, by the sheer intractableness of things. These familiar preoccupations exercised the minds of liberals and socialists around 1848. Not only have they not lost any of their relevance, they have indeed gained in urgency in our own time.

IN THE WESTERN highly industrialised and urbanised societies, the welfare state has by now become generally accepted to the point of considerably blunting the differences between liberal-democratic and social-democratic attitudes on social policy. But the relationship between the public and the private sector—state control and individual initiative, personal incentives and the general good, the ravages which the insatiable urge to consume (with runaway inflation as its inevitable consequence) is visiting upon society as a whole, upon the quality of life, the environment, and the future prospects of mankind—continues to cause deep and often bewildered concern, and to revive Malthusian fears.

The dread of extreme bureaucratisation and

centralisation into rigidly authoritarian systems presided over by self-perpetuating groups has proved only too justified in the Communist countries. There the apparent disillusionment with the Old Left appeal to social conscience as sufficient to induce men to exert themselves for the general welfare—equated with the personal good—has even led to the introduction of enormous discrepancies in material and other rewards and in social standing in general.

As for the New Left, it has been a type of neo-anarchistic reaction against the seemingly inevitable degeneration of revolutionary Messianic tidings into bureaucratic establishments. I am also tempted to regard the Chinese permanent cultural revolutionary waves too as efforts designed to hamper and prevent by means of

**"LEFT" AND "RIGHT"** imply that ideologies run along a straight line, whose extreme ends cannot meet. This is false—bring the two ends of the line together in a circle: Left and Right join neatly.

Men on the extreme Left and Right are blood brothers: they think they are blood enemies, but that is only a manifestation of their underlying paranoia. Violent and doctrinaire souls seek psychological catharsis from political activism: if they cannot win victory under a red flag they rush to march under a brown or black one. It is not surprising that the Nazis welcomed ex-Communists, and that Communists on famous occasions made peace with Fascists.

True Believers require verbalisations of virtue: idealistic motives, noble goals, apocalyptic utterances. The faithful need to reinforce their convictions by reckless references to History, which supposedly sanctions their cause and guarantees their success.

The loyal Left/Right shower starry-eyed, lump-in-the-throat adulation upon their leaders—who pose as modest saints; they are, in fact either (a) deluded simpletons, (b) power-starved intellectuals, (c) hoodlums using political jargon, or (d) manqué thinkers who confuse over-simplification with truth, and rhetoric with analysis.

In politics, words are worth battalions. Take "All Power to the People!"—clear, simple, noble... and fraudulent. The slogan would be accurate and honest if it ran: "All power to the people who shout 'All Power to the People!'"

<sup>6</sup> LEO ROSTEN's career as a political scientist (among other academic posts, he was Ford Visiting Professor of Political Science at the University of California from 1960–61) is perhaps less widely known than his Hyman Kaplan books (written under the name of "Leonard Q. Ross") and his humorous/philological work, *The Joys of Yiddish* (1968). His most recent book is *Dear Herm* (W. H. Allen, 1975).

THE CAPACITY OF MORTALS to deceive themselves through the reiteration of inflammatory symbols is as limitless as it is ludicrous: hence the transmutation of opaque or foolish or muddled political bibles: "Das Kapital, Mein Kampf" the "Sayings of Chairman Mao."

If the collectivist road to power is paved with dogmas, the democratic road to power is paved with promises. But democratic power is never total and permanent (it does require periodic renewal at the polls). Authoritarian power must be total, and strives for permanence. The most ingenious and energetic aspect of Left/Right terminology is its capacity to justify trickery, rationalise deception, disseminate falsehoods, and resort to violence—all in the name of "higher" necessity.

Both Left and Right harbour fanatics who are enslaved by inflexible rubrics and propelled by intractable hatreds. It never dawns on the faithful that a ruling Committee is more cruel than a ruling Class; or that Commissars (of whatever hue) are much more powerful than capitalists.

The vocabulary of democracy fosters dissidence; the language of monolithic ideologues conceals the horror of ends justifying hidden means. Hence, democratic language is tentative and ameliorative; collectivist language is thunderous, conclusive, and hypocritical.

POLITICAL IRRATIONALITY is not resolved by pretentious and obfuscating theories. When compromise is dismissed as weakness, and viability branded "betrayal"; when revenge replaces adjustment; when Security supersedes Freedom; when party orders enforce conformity and abolish the refreshing variety (and disorder) of liberty—then political verbiage has succeeded in whitewashing the contemptible purposes of that extremism which must characterise the far Left/Right. Seen in the true light of history, it is they who are "reactionary", not we.

**Leo Rosten<sup>6</sup>**

periodic shake-ups the ossification of the Party and the Party apparatus and government into an élitist Mandarin establishment.

WHERE ARE WE TO PUT the perhaps most potent force in modern times—Nationalism—in this scheme of progressive-left-liberal - democratic; conservative - reactionary; individualism - Communist - collectivism; and Fascist Nazism?

No other force—except Christianity—has adapted itself to such a variety of situations, has been put to so many and to such different uses, and has proved itself so powerful in subordinating to itself so many other, often seemingly hostile, tendencies and aspirations.

Nationalism is, from this point of view, a Janus-faced phenomenon. It aspires to secure free self-expression to the collective personality; it offers an answer to the need to belong; it bestows a sense of dignity and of equal and active partnership in the common destiny, in the national endeavour, and in the process of asserting the social will and identity. But, on the other hand, it also tends to subordinate the individual's freedom of decision and choice to the imperatives of the historic heritage (national tradition, authentic spirit, manifest destiny, reason of state). It employs—not unlike similarly totalitarian-democratic ideologies, the category of the True, the Authentic, or the “better self” of the individual. The growing accentuation of national peculiarity—coupled with the growth of the role of the state in modern times, and the tensions between heavily armed rival nations (and, no less importantly, the conflicts between dominant and subject races in countries of mixed populations)—all these have placed Nationalism in the role of sometimes ally, but more often rival, of liberalism, democracy, socialism. It has contributed to étatist Fascism and racist hegemonies.

Was it really the development of the gradual, reformist approach that led the Social-Democratic parties in the later 19th century to become part and parcel of the national community, instead of forming true sections of the International, *i.e.* the proletarian camp of Revolution? Quite the reverse. The fact that it was admitted or grew into the national community caused the toning down of class war and international Revolutionism in favour of parliamentary procedures.

Both the Imperial German establishment and the radical wing of the S.P.D. were led to focus on Nationalism in its militarist, aggressive, and imperialist form. The Right saw in the myth of “the Nation-in-eternal-struggle” an antidote to the cosmopolitan ideologies of class war and

international proletarian solidarity. And it was of course a powerful prop to its own position as “the guardian of the authentic spirit and destiny of the German Nation.” The extreme Left responded by turning the fight against the myth of the Nation “one and indivisible” into a test case. It seized upon it as the surest way of weaning the workers away from feudal-bourgeois tutelage and of undercutting the branch upon which the ruling castes perched. War was abhorrent not only for humanitarian reasons, but feared also as the most dangerous test of “international proletarian solidarity” *v.* the “militarist subjugation of the workers’ movement.” War was also looked upon by the extreme believers as the hour of destiny for the explosion of class antagonism and the triumph of the international revolution.

IN THE CLASSICAL EMPIRE of Nationalities—Austro-Hungary—the race war between the German minority defending its heritage and age-long hegemony, and the Slavs (above all the Czechs) waging a campaign of national reconquest and, at the same time, appealing to the democratic principle of one-man-one-vote, gave rise not only to street violence and parliamentary obstructionism, but brought into being ideas and forms of struggle, which served the Austrian Adolf Hitler as inspiration and lesson. I refer to the idea of embattled, permanently mobilised races under authoritarian charismatic leadership strenuously preserving their racial purity, authenticity and fighting prowess against the foes from outside and the “biological-spiritual” solvents from within. Of momentous importance was another development in Austro-Hungary: the failure of the desperate effort of Victor Adler to preserve the unity of the Social-Democratic movement in the multi-national Empire as proof of the power of Socialism to realise the ideal of Internationalism in face of the onslaught of Nationalist passion and race hatred. Not only the Austrian party, but even—to the horror of socialists all over Europe—the united Trade Union movement broke up into the component ethnic groups, thus demonstrating how much stronger than “international proletarian brotherhood” was the Nationalist urge and the resolve of the Socialist parties of the respective subjugated nations to play the role of what Marx had called the *national* parties (*i.e.* rather than remain parts of the indivisible Revolutionary camp).

Strange reversals of roles occurred as a result of nationalist struggle. In Austro-Hungary, Orthodox Socialists became the law-abiding allies of the Habsburg monarchy (*K. K. Hofräte*, as they were sneeringly called) in the common concern to preserve the unity of the

Danubian Empire. In Britain, the bitter clash of 1913–14 between the Catholic Irish and the Ulster Protestants, between Liberals and Tories on the subject of Home Rule, caused British Generals and Tory leaders to incite the Ulster Protestant population and British soldiers to disobey government orders and flaunt the expressed will of parliament. And what portents of things to come were Boulangism and the Dreyfus affair in France!—turning the once Jacobin petty bourgeoisie, now threatened by the upper-middle class and the proletariat, with ignoble distinction, towards authoritarian integral nationalism.

IT WAS IN THE LIFE-AND-DEATH STRUGGLE of totally mobilised nations in World War I that Europe lost its commanding place in the world. European man forfeited his self-confidence and self-reliance, which were bred by a century of unprecedented scientific, technological, economic and cultural advance, rule of law and civilised existence; and he was jolted out of his inhibitions and reverences, which had held barbarism at bay.

The first political victim was *liberalism*. It had already been subjected for decades to erosion from various quarters—mass society; the growing power of the State; nationalist passion; acute class conflict; Revolutionary radicalism; unbridled imperialist greed; Social Darwinism; and racist domineering hubris. The martyrdom of War was too horrible to be borne without expectation of commensurate compensations. Hence the Messianic slogans of “the War to End All Wars”, to make the earth “fit for heroes”, to set subjugated nations free, to enthroned democracy.

At the one pole of the spectrum of Messianic visions there appeared Lenin’s (and Rosa Luxemburg’s) message of the final collapse of bourgeois civilisation and their call to turn the war of nations, brought about by rival imperialisms (which, after having extended capitalist exploitation to the confines of the earth, had nowhere to go, and as a consequence had divided the globe into two united international camps: world capitalism v. the world proletariat) into a global civil war. While the two prophets of World Revolution proclaimed the nation-state “obsolete” and quite dead in the age of imperial-industrial super-powers, Mussolini, once an extreme revolutionary, and an international socialist who became disillusioned by Reformist *embourgeoisement*, saw things more prophetically. He concluded from the breakdown of international Socialist solidarity on 4 August 1914—and from the *élan* which swept the nations into

the War and kept them fighting doggedly to death in the trenches—the lesson of the unsurpassed vitality and supreme reality of the religion of Nationalism.

Both Hitler and Mussolini were brought up on the Darwinian theory of the mortal struggle for a share of the cosmic force, and the survival of the fittest; on the denial of any Providential design by Darwin and on Nietzsche’s passionate rejection of any Theodicean dénouement of the drama of history in reconciliation, harmony, equality and rationality. Mussolini and Hitler raised the Race’s or Nation’s self-realisation (and the rearing of a superior specimen in the crucible of struggle, rivalry and conquest) to the dignity of the supreme goal of history.

Just as Bolshevism “absolutised” the basic common tenets of Social-Democracy into a rigid dogmatic all-embracing and exclusive religion, so did Fascism and Nazism “absolutise” Nationalist ideas, more immediately the frustrations, resentments and rages of their respective nations after 1918, into a cause for total, aggressive mobilisation. The extreme ideologies proclaimed a state-of-war emergency against hostile conspiracies, the sinister alliances of external and internal foes. They universalised their immediate needs and objectives into messages of total and all-inclusive renovation. In the offing were the inauguration of the true world socialist order, a new Roman Empire, a thousand-year *Reich* from Bordeaux to Odessa. Racist Nazism offered itself as a replica to Marxism. Matter as the primary datum was replaced by blood; changes in “modes of production” were substituted by the changes in the composition of the blood; the idea of class struggle found a “mirror-image” in Jewish finance-capitalism and Judeo-Marxist socialism. A social revolution was to be achieved by the elimination of Jews (and the confiscation of their wealth for national and social purposes).

The October Revolution was carried out in the name of (and, indeed, was by its makers conditioned upon) the immediate spread of the World Revolution to the West. But the reduction of those hopes to “Socialism in One Country” paradoxically turned all the Marxists elsewhere, whose for long dormant Messianic sentiments were inflamed by the victory of the Bolshevik myth of global revolution, into “Nationalists of a foreign power” (as Léon Blum put it). “Socialism in one country” (and in a backward and ruined one), living in fear of an encircling capitalist plot at that, impelled its leaders not only to resort to terrorist dictatorship and hurriedly to set up at all costs a heavy industry to supply arms, but also to “close the gap” by means of forced collectivisation and command-industrialisation.

Hitler was able to inhibit liberal-democratic stirrings in semi-feudal Eastern Europe by playing upon the deep-seated historic fears of the newly created, precariously weak, and anxious Nation-States on the subject of the historic "Russian peril" (made now more insidious by its ideological appeal); to exploit the ill-will towards the old peculiar position of a special minority by propagandising "The Jewish Menace"; and to paralyse the disillusioned Western democracies, haunted by the horrible memories of total war and the futility of the post-1918 arrangements by the invocation of "the Communist Threat."

The West fared even worse after the gigantic confrontation of World War II. Communism was imposed upon vast areas by the Soviet Empire, parading as the spokesman for Socialist international unanimity. Liberal-democratic America, which derived its historic and national ideology from universal premises, was paradoxically placed in the role of a counter-revolutionary conservative guardian of traditional, obsolete, and oppressive régimes.

From the point of view of the juxtaposition of the myth of the National and The Myth of the Revolution, the ideological orientations of post-1945 display curious and contradictory developments. The nationalist uprisings of the colonial nations rallied to the banner of Marxist revolution in the same way as the nationalist rebels in the first part of the 19th century leaned towards (or were decried as being agents of) Jacobinism. In all the new Asian and African countries, the democratic slogans of national liberation movements, however, soon gave way to authoritarian dictatorship. Their Socialist or left-wing professions of faith seem to be utilised as levers of detribalisation. Their centralised dictatorial governments served as means of carrying out industrialisation and maintaining strong armies, and as a way of propagating a myth of a joint national endeavour.

The Left's ideology once seemed to be a seamless web. It has been deeply rent by Titoism; by the uprisings in Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia (put down in the name of the Brezhnev doctrine of so called comradely solidarity), and by the heretical tendencies of Italian and French Communism. These developments have bestowed upon nationalist separatism the appearance of a libertarian tendency. As for the Chinese schism, it is in a category all of its own; and it should perhaps be viewed rather from the vantage point of the momentous racial-social

cleavages convulsing various countries and indeed the wider world into two camps of the rich White North and the undernourished, underprivileged Coloured South (albeit with the Japanese and the Arabs upsetting the symmetry). Will China emerge as the leader of the resentful, disinherited, coloured races against the satiated White race?

By one of those breath-taking ironies of history, the nomadic dwellers of the Arabian deserts have been hurled on the way to become the feudal overlords of our world economy, fattening on seigniorial tributes and dues for the possession of immense treasures which they inherited without knowing it, almost in a "fit of absent-mindedness", without delving or spinning, without making any scientific-industrial contribution to their utilisation. They seem to be succeeding in identifying the myth of the revolutionary national-liberation of the "Third World" with the ideology of a world struggle against an American-imperialist conspiracy, inspired by the descendants of (in Hitler's language) the Jewish historic inciters or from Moses to Lenin of the international revolt of the inferior mobs against the national élites.

One of these days Socialists and other progressive internationalists may begin to wonder whether nationalisation of natural wealth, land and mines, of basic industries and utilities, within the confines of a nation-state, should not be combined in "parallel development" with the internationalisation of those basic commodities without which national economies, deprived of them by a freak of nature, simply cannot exist. Why should private, exclusive ownership and the unlimited and arbitrary right of the disposal of, say, oil be reserved as a sacred natural right to groups and castes which do not owe account even to their own peoples? We have here an unprecedented case of a late feudalism taking on all the historic traits of early monopoly-capitalism and high exploitative imperialism. Once again a grievous source of puzzlement for Western minds still trapped in ancient Left/Right categories.

## *Peregrine Worsthorne<sup>7</sup>*

THE Chips Channon diaries, which were published a few years ago, painted a horrible picture of the British ruling class of the 1930s—snobbish, insensitive, frivolous, vulgar—gossiping and bitching away as the country went to rack and ruin. The book made me understand, more than anything else I have ever read, why so many intellectuals of that period began to see Red; why the Audens and the Spenders and the Strachays became sympathetic to communism.

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For how could anyone want to conserve, or not want to destroy, such a decadent political and social set-up?

My own boyhood experience of that period, however, was very different, since I was brought up in a part of the ruling class which was highly responsible, honourable, and public-spirited. The business of governing was taken immensely seriously, and the "goings on" of Mayfair society despised and deplored. I remember my family talking about Chips Channon, but always with contempt. His frivolous world seemed a mere excrescence, by comparison with which their lot, the non-idle rich, appeared as all the more valuable and laudable.

And then came the war, which confirmed this impression, since the governing class proved itself basically sound. Its Chips Channon element paled into insignificance, entirely overshadowed by the grandeur of Churchill—a relation of mine as it happened. I am trying to explain why I am a Conservative, and part of the answer undoubtedly is that my formative years were passed under the influence of that part of the ruling class which, not for the first time, turned up trumps.

It seemed to me then, and seems to me now, that compared with the rest of Europe, Britain was very fortunate in having a class system that did not disintegrate under the weight of the inter-War problems. Temptations to veer to the Right or to the Left were resisted. To a degree that was little short of miraculous British society passed through the slump with its unity intact, willing and able to defeat Hitler, just as it had passed through the strains of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century with its unity intact, able and willing to defeat Napoleon.

Such a record speaks well for the British ruling class, and for the British political and social system. I know of no other ruling class that has governed an increasingly free society with such a sure touch, for ever expanding its ranks to take in the "new men." Of brutal oppression, there was none in modern times. Nor scandalous abuse of power. Nothing comparable to Watergate ever disgraced British public life in modern times. Nor, even in the heyday of the British empire, was there ever a national agency so dishonourable as the CIA.

**W**HEREIN LAY the secret of this achievement? No, I am not going to be so foolish as to try to answer that question. Suffice it to say here that there has evolved a gentlemanly tradition of public life in this country which produced a high proportion of honourable, truthful and decent rulers, who trusted each other and exercised power with restraint and responsibility. My youth was spent in the company of just those types of

people, and their existence is an incomparable blessing for which any society must thank its stars.

My understanding of the function of conservatism in the current period, at any rate so far as Britain is concerned, is to resist the pressures which would destroy this valuable species, which means also preserving something of their natural habitat, the social conditions, that is, which made them what they are. This was successfully done throughout the rough years of British Capitalism, during which period the distinctively inhuman or impersonal characteristics of that type of economic organisation were never allowed entirely to supersede the gentlemanly tradition of human relations or the paternalistic concept of *noblesse oblige*.

Such a violent transformation could have taken place if the conservative instincts and interests of the landowning class had not been strong enough—and well enough articulated and promoted in Parliament by both the Whig and Tory Parties—to prevent the new industrialists and manufacturers from demanding too much too quickly. The former gave way to the latter, but slowly and gradually, so that the transference of power, protracted over a century, resembled a merger rather than a conquest; a marriage (in many cases literally) rather than a rape.

As a result, there was never a British Administration in the 19th century of the Nixon type, composed of raw men—British equivalents of Messrs Haldeman and Erlichman—with chips on their shoulders and no feel for the proprieties of power, just as in the heyday of the *Pax Britannica* there were no British equivalents of the American generals in Viet Nam who felt it proper to fight a colonial war, not according to the chivalrous and honourable traditions of arms, but according to the inhuman capitalist ethics of mass production or rather, in their case, mass destruction; and even no British junior officer equivalent to the infamous Lt Calley, whose social background and education so manifestly rendered him unsuited to the high responsibilities of commanding men in battle.

Needless to say, I am not trying to suggest that the old landed aristocracy in Britain, with its feudal conceptions about the exercise of power, sought to hang on to its privileges with the conscious aim of civilising the bourgeoisie, or of mitigating the ruthlessness of human relations under capitalism, or of continuing to supply a cadre of public men with a sense of old-fashioned honour. It hung on for reasons of selfish survival, like any other threatened ruling class. But the consequence of it hanging on, of it being able to hang on, was the preservation of a ruling-class tradition which, at any rate until recently, served this country well.

IN RECENT YEARS, OF COURSE, this ruling-class tradition has come increasingly under assault from the forces of socialism; and much more effectively so than ever it did from the forces of capitalism. In theory, there was no need for this to be the case, because in many ways a socialist system of economic organisation positively requires a ruling-class tradition capable of producing a regular stream of honourable men and women inspired by an ideal of paternalistic public service. Whereas capitalism relies on the dynamic of competition and acquisitiveness, and encourages and rewards those who can best respond to the disciplines of the market, socialism depends for its successful operation on the availability at the top of high-class politicians and bureaucrats; on the availability, that is, of qualities of leadership and habits of command which are remarkably similar, strangely enough, to those held in such high esteem by public school headmasters like the great Dr Arnold of Rugby.

By any realistic assessment, therefore, a social tradition productive of authoritative leaders born and trained to exercise political and administrative responsibility—an officer class, if you like—is incomparably more essential for a socialist system than a capitalistic one, because a socialist system has to be, by its very nature, hierarchical (as the experience of the Soviet Union demonstrates so well).

In the Soviet Union, of course, this socialist problem of political leadership is rendered relatively easy by the existence of dictatorship, because orders there can be enforced at the point of the gun. But democratic socialism cannot rely on coercion, has to seek to develop ways and means of inducing voluntary obedience, which require an infinitely higher order of political skill and man management. More than any other conceivable system of economic organisation, democratic socialism needs to create a social climate favourable to the exercise of authority, by which I mean a social climate in which those giving the orders are bred to do so in an impressive style and manner likely to induce in those who receive them a voluntary inclination to acquiesce.

That kind of social climate was, of course, exactly what the British class system did produce, until socialism, with its dedication to the ideal of equality, stepped in and put an end to it. Here, in my view, socialism (or, at any rate, democratic socialism) made a tragic error, because its commitment to egalitarianism, unavoidable as it was, can now be seen to cloud its future prospects. For without a prestigious ruling class, enjoying a way of life that commands respect, admiration and emulation, democratic socialism finds it increasingly difficult to govern without falling back on coercion, or forward into chaos, neither

of which dangers are absent from the contemporary British scene.

**B**UT THE TRUTH IS that a commitment to egalitarianism, to social levelling, was not inherent in the theory of socialism, in the sense of being a necessary condition for the successful operation of a collectivist economy. The opposite is the truth. A collectivist economy, as I say, precisely because it concentrates such a wide range of decisions in the hands of the government, is peculiarly in need of a governing class. But of course, given the historical circumstances of its birth, British socialism was bound to be blind to this truth, because the old aristocracy and the new bourgeoisie were so interconnected as to be virtually inseparable and it would have been impossible to seek to destroy the one without seeking to destroy the other. Opposition to Capitalism, therefore, inevitably involved opposition to the entire existing social system, including such parts of it as were based on a paternalist, pre-capitalist system of social values. So the insights of aristocracy, of paternalism, of *noblesse oblige*, which in my view are essential to the success of democratic socialism, were anathematised along with the values of Capitalism, since the two had come to seem as one and the same.

Thus it was that British socialism has always failed to come to terms with the questions of leadership, of authority—merely begging them, as in the absurd belief that if only the ruled could be made equal with the rulers, then the need for authority would fade away, since all the problems of command and obedience in society would disappear in the dawn of a new era of mutual cooperation.

Needless to say, this has not happened, and shows no sign of happening. Although class privilege in Britain during the last 25 years has been massively diminished, there has been no corresponding increase in the willingness of people to accept the necessary disciplines of a collectivist society. The socialist Left argues that this is because Britain is still not egalitarian enough; that all will be well if differentials in wealth, education, housing are narrowed even further. Only when the last vestiges of class privilege and superiority have been eliminated will the people feel willing to give of their best.

THE PRIME TASK OF CONSERVATISM today, it seems to me, is to challenge this assumption: to oppose this egalitarian aspect of socialism much more vehemently than those other parts which press for the State to control the economy ever more comprehensively. These economic aspects seem to be fairly compelling, because densely

populated industrial communities cannot allow their destinies to be determined by a free-for-all. Classical liberalism no longer makes sense. I simply do not believe that the drift towards increasing power of the State will be significantly reversed; or that the cause of freedom is promoted by linking conservatism to such an impractical aim.

Much more crucial, given the circumstances of the last quarter of the 20th century, is the search for ways and means to civilise the exercise of State power, since once the conclusion is reached that it cannot be reduced, then the first and over-riding problem must be to evolve a social tradition that produces honourable and decent rulers—in a word, gentlemen—which in turn means switching attention from the needs and aspirations of those at the bottom of society to the needs and aspirations of those at the top.

It is in this field that socialist thinking is so weak, because of its original—perfectly understandable at the time—orientation towards the needs of the underprivileged. As a result, there is no socialist interest in, or understanding of, the other side of the coin: the problem of social engineering as it applies to the creation of the right kind of political and administrative leadership. For this vastly important purpose, crude egalitarianism is a manifest nonsense, since it wholly fails to recognise the value of, say, the public schools as training grounds for the qualities of leadership which a socialist system requires; the need for cohesion and mutual trust in a governing élite, which can perhaps best be guaranteed if its members come from the same kind of social background; the value to society of there being a certain hereditary stratum with an age-old tradition of public service; the connection between political independence of mind and the security that comes from private affluence; the need to guarantee the right mixture at the top of new men and old, so that the defensive harshness of those who have struggled to “make it” should be mitigated by the relaxed assurance of those born to the purple; the undoubted psychological fact that most people prefer to be ruled, not by their equals, but by their superiors, whose style and manner commands respect; the relevance of glamour, panache, and colour to the arts of governing, none of which is likely to flower except in privileged soil; the impossibility of upholding authority in the State unless those who wield it are encouraged to do so with pride and glory, without always having to apologise for being high and mighty; and, most important

of all, the fundamental dependence of free institutions on there being a social class which associates their defence with the survival of its own privileges, and is therefore prepared to defend them with that special ferocity which is only generated when selfishness is added to idealism.

Communist dictators can ignore these aspects of social organisation, because the rulers use the State as an instrument of coercion. But democratic socialists have no such option. Yet so deep is their addiction to egalitarian rhetoric that they are precluded from seeing that Britain's old class structure, far from standing in their way, could well form the mould in which British socialism grew to maturity, setting an example to the rest of the Western world. Paradoxical as it may seem, it could be the Conservative party which seizes this opportunity, marrying the economic insights of socialism to a Tory understanding of how to civilise the exercise of power. *Noblesse oblige*—that is a far more relevant inspiration for British socialism today than class envy or the dictatorship of the proletariat. Tory men, socialist measures—that would be the ideal, although under Mrs Thatcher we are unlikely to get either.

WHAT STRIKES ME ever more forcibly is the inadequacy of socialism as a theory of Government, since its historical antecedents blind it to the social value to any society of public-spirited leaders possessed of political skills and inspired by values and ideals which take generations of privilege to produce. Such a tradition of leadership did exist in Britain, and this was a precious social artefact which the Labour Party, in its own interests, should be seeking to conserve. But it will not and cannot.

## Golo Mann<sup>8</sup>

THERE IS, after all, a difference between terms—between, say, the term “ant” and the term “liberalism” (or any other “ism”). Ants are given factors created by Nature and clearly defined. “Isms” are *not* given factors; they are man-made, and each can interpret them as he chooses. It is, of course, preferable to interpret them meaningfully and in rough accord with common sense so that their significance becomes plain. On the other hand, there is always the temptation to adopt a polemical, demagogic interpretation: “conservative” then becomes equated with “fascistoid”, “liberal” with “socialist”, and so on.

Two factors forever tend to cast doubt on the clarity of political terms. In the first place, they

<sup>8</sup> GOLO MANN is a distinguished German historian. His most recent work to be translated into English is his epic biography, *Wallenstein* (André Deutsch, 1976).

nearly always hail from the more or less remote past, from periods in which the objects of public controversy differed from those of today. "Conservative" and "liberal", "right" and "left", date from the early 19th century. We who live in the latter part of the 20th century are faced with wholly different problems. Secondly, "isms" generally amalgamate diverse beliefs, propensities and attitudes which can, but need not, be espoused by one and the same person. For instance, the classical liberal used to believe in a law of Nature or in natural rights. However, there were conservatives who did likewise without approving of other beliefs ascribed to classical liberalism, e.g. the belief in the need for a weak or as far as possible inactive central government.

Or, to take an example based on my own experience: I was long regarded in the German Federal Republic as "left-wing" because I urged recognition of the post-1945 realities and advocated *Ostverträge* normalising treaties with the East. So—later on—did the German Social Democrats, but this common ground did not make me a Social Democrat (in the accepted sense). I did not have to share all their belief because I shared this particular one. My motives, too, may have differed, for they derived from a somewhat melancholy realism or pessimism and had nothing in common with the Messianic hopes of *Bundeskanzler* Brandt. In other words, it is possible to select individual flowers from various bunches without settling on the entire bouquet.

I see some significance in the following description of the conservative temperament. Every change, every "advance", brings gains and losses. Often, though not invariably (not, for example, where the discovery of anaesthetics was concerned!), the conservative will deplore the losses more deeply than he rejoices in the gains. (Cars are all very well, but the world would be nicer without them.) Though devoid of immediate practical significance, this propensity may have practical results. The conservative's faith in mankind, himself included, is subject to strong reservations. He knows that there are human

beings only partly guided by reason and permanently capable of endangering themselves—that a Lebanese or Northern Irish situation can arise at any time. Accordingly, he values the cohesive forces of tradition. He tends to let sleeping dogs lie. He is prepared to compromise. He mistrusts the high hopes, world-redeeming ideas, and grand idealistic enterprises which never yield what is expected of them and often produce the contrary. The conservative believes in experience, in the concrete, in Burkean "circumstances." Although not necessarily and universally opposed to liberal ideas, his thoughts and feelings necessarily and universally run counter to what presents itself as revolutionary, doctrinaire utopian, and omniscient.

There are issues to which conservative thinking can be "relevant", even today; for instance, those concerned with foreign policy. Not so in other fields. Whether "zero growth" is currently preferable to accelerated industrial production, whether "worker participation in factory management" is good or bad, whether banks and insurance companies should be nationalised or not, *etc., etc.*—no answer to these questions can be extracted from conservative (or liberal) principles. Or indeed liberal-left principles.

Concepts and *isms* can be quite neatly differentiated on paper. The real picture is altogether blurred. For example, conservative thinking can readily turn into cynicism. But so can idealistic and revolutionary thinking. (Bismarck the conservative was a cynic; yet Lenin the revolutionary was a far more repellent one.)

The entrepreneurs, capitalists, and managers—or whatever old name one favours for a new type—are living in interesting times. Most regard themselves as conservative because they wish that taxes were lower, the powers of the state over industry weaker (except where it helps them) and the trade-unions less uppish or *frech*. The fact is that applied science, technology, and industry are revolutionising our world far more rapidly and profoundly than any ideologist; and that they are constantly posing new problems to which, in my view, conservative, liberal, and socialist ideas are equally irrelevant.

# Reflections on the First Night of *Comus*

ONE OF W. B. YEATS'S LAST PLAYS, *The Death of Cuchulain*, begins with "a bare stage of any period", on to which enters "a very old man looking like something out of mythology." The old man, who is a surrogate for the author, opens the play with these words:

I have been asked to produce a play called *The Death of Cuchulain*. It is the last of a series of plays which has for theme his life and death. I have been selected because I am out of fashion and out of date like the antiquated romantic stuff the thing is made of. I am so old that I have forgotten the name of my father and mother, unless indeed I am, as I affirm, the son of Talma, and he was so old that his friends and acquaintances still read Virgil and Homer. When they told me that I could have my own way, I wrote certain guiding principles on a bit of newspaper. I wanted an audience of fifty or a hundred, and if there are more, I beg them not to shuffle their feet or talk when the actors are speaking. I am sure that as I am producing a play for people I like, it is not probable, in this vile age, that they will be more in number than those who listened to the first performance of Milton's *Comus*. On the present occasion they must know the old epics and Mr Yeats' plays about them; such people, however poor, have libraries of their own. If there are more than a hundred I won't be able to escape people who are educating themselves out of the Book Societies and the like, sciolists all, pickpockets and opinionated bitches. Why pickpockets? I will explain that, I will make it all quite clear.

The burden of the speech (it goes on for about as long again) is clear enough, the familiar Yeatsian preference for the "dream of the noble and the beggarman" as against the world of "Book Societies and the like." What pulled me up, when I was looking at the play again recently, was the reference to the first night of *Comus*. Obviously this is not fortuitous; it takes its place with all those references in Yeats to a lofty art produced for the few who by birth and training are fit to receive it, all that talk of "Duke Ercole, that bid His mummings to the market-place", and the great gazebo, and the wondrous blade of the Japanese sword. It might be interesting, I thought, to conjure up the first night of *Comus*, to see it as Yeats might have seen it, and as we see it now.

*COMUS* WAS NOT called *Comus* until the 18th century; Milton's own name for it was *A Maske, Presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634: on Michaelmasse Night, before the Right Honourable John Earle of Bridgewater, Vicount Brackly, Lord Praesident of Wales, and one of His Majesties most honourable Privie Counsell*. And within that cadre it must be judged. This, of course, applies to all Milton's work. He was a highly social poet. His notion of poetry was not one of unbridled self-expression, but of personal utterance within recognised forms. These forms, though "discovered, not devised", had something of the authority found in venerable objects in nature; they were, at the very least, dignified and ancient buildings, whose making was the result of collaborative effort by the European literary community of whom he knew himself to be one. Every one of Milton's works, from his earliest efforts to his most mature masterpieces, is consciously aligned to a particular tradition within the over-arching tradition of European letters, and in each case he has studied the form he is using until he inhabits it naturally, at ease with its history and its nuances. By the same token he demands always to be judged by a jury of those who have made a similar effort. Thus the preface to *Samson Agonistes*, while offering a sketch of classical tragedy which will at any rate suffice to fill in the gaps of the unlearned reader, adds pointedly that when it comes to his handling of the story ("the disposition of the fable"), "they only will best judge who are not unacquainted with Aeschulus, Sophocles, and Euripedes." To take Milton's collected poetry in one's hand, and fairly claim to understand and be in a position to judge every poem, calls for a very comprehensive knowledge of European literature. The Victorian critic Mark Pattison remarked that "an appreciation of Milton is the last reward of consummate scholarship", and has been a good deal

laughed at for his pains, but what Pattison doubtless had in mind was not the mere spotting of every reference as if one were a walking dictionary, but the reading and meditation required to see each of Milton's poems in its appropriate landscape.

So we will try to see *Comus*. A masque is not a play, and does not grow from the same root. Drama is a narrative art, telling a story not by means of direct recounting but by representative action. A masque, though it has some tenuous narrative or situational thread, is much closer to ritual and celebration. Its origins are very ancient, and take us into anthropology. The most satisfying general study of the subject, Enid Welsford's *The Court Masque* (1927), lays down the guideline in its very first paragraph:

Curiously enough, the Court masquerade, that very sophisticated amusement of Renaissance society, was more primitive than the drama of the rough Elizabethan playhouses.

The masque is a celebration, and everywhere shows the marks of its origins in that basic stratum where magic and religion meet, where the human being demonstrates his eternal need to signalise and memorialise the pivotal events of existence—change of season and harvest, death and rebirth, marriage, conflict. As soon as any society emerges out of the fog of pre-history we find it busy with these rituals. The refined 17th-century court masque has many direct links with the festivals of some primitive settlement, and two in particular: the lavishing of resources, and the notion of salvation by touching.

The first is too obvious to need much comment. Primitive agricultural peoples, who lack the resources to keep their animals alive during the winter, have to slaughter and eat them in the autumn, so that even people who live flat on the subsistence level have a week or so in which they gorge themselves like bears preparing for the winter, and for the same reason. The masque, right up to its final blaze of magnificence in the early 17th century, retains this atmosphere of abundance. Considering that a masque was always a one-off performance, the amount of money and effort that went into the staging is nothing short of astounding. We can remind ourselves of this extravagance, this conspicuous consumption run amok, by a glance at the stage directions of a typical Whitehall masque, Carew's *Coelum Britannicum*, which was put on only two years before *Comus* and numbered some of the same performers.

When this Antimasque was past, there began to arise out of the earth the top of a hill, which, by little and little, grew to be a huge mountain, that covered all the scene; the under-part of this was wild and craggy, and above somewhat more pleasant and flourishing; about the middle part of this mountain were seated the three kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland, all richly attired in regal habits, appropriated to the several nations, with crowns on their heads, and each of them bearing the ancient arms of the kingdoms they represented. At a distance above these sat a young man in a white embroidered robe; upon his fair hair an olive garland, with wings at his shoulders, and holding in his hand a cornucopia filled with corn and fruits, representing the Genius of these kingdoms.

And again:

The dance being past, there appears in the further part of the heaven coming down a pleasant cloud, bright and transparent; which, coming softly downwards before the upper part of the mountain, embraceth the Genius, but so as through it all his body is seen; and then rising again with a gentle motion, bears up the Genius of the three kingdoms, and being past the airy region, pierceth the heavens, and is no more seen; at that instant, the rock with the three kingdoms on it sinks, and is hidden in the earth. This strange spectacle gave great cause of admiration, but especially how so huge a machine, and of that great height, could come from under the stage, which was but six foot high.

Another feature that links the court masque with its primitive ancestor is the notion of salvation by touching. Primitive societies, and perhaps all of us in the primitive reaches of our being, have a rooted belief in contagious holiness. When an animal is ritually slaughtered or hunted down, its blood is often flung out over the bystanders so that as many of them as possible may be touched by the blood (*i.e.*, the life) of the beast on whom the survival of the people depends. And when the ritual culminates in a dance, the dance winds through the village, in and out of people's houses, so that the greatest number of inhabitants may be touched by its powerful magic. The ceremonial hunter dons the skin and horns of the animal, to take over its sacredness by contact; and as with animals, so with plants.

I was among the crowd in the streets of Oxford at six o'clock last May morning, and there among them was Jack-in-the-Green, with his framework of freshly leaved branches, moving among the thickest of the throng, touching them, sharing with them the sacred power of vegetation. In the masque this survives in the convention that ends the entertainment with a general dance: not just a dance in which the performers take themselves offstage, but a dance in which the performers and

audience combine, in which the rehearsed and acted emblematic narrative becomes one with the general and spontaneous celebration, the audience become performers and the ritual gathers up everyone present.

THE MASQUE HAS YET ONE MORE MARK of its celebratory origin, one that we who are reared in a modern bureaucratic state will find hard to understand. Feudal society—and the heyday of the masque coincided with the final self-consuming blaze of feudalism—is already hieratic, structured, symbolic, already half-way to being like a lofty ceremonial entertainment in itself. The masque unites many arts in the celebrating of a person or persons of high estate, royal or noble; the performers are not usually professionals, but other members of the same aristocracy, offering their skill in singing, dancing and reciting poetry, in an act of homage between equals; the effect is to re-state and confirm those values by the grace of which the aristocracy exists and performs its function, which is to govern.

In other words, the masque celebrates those virtues which, by a legal fiction, are supposed to be inherent in an aristocracy—a ruling caste that perpetuates itself by a mixture of heredity and training. This legal fiction is not, any more than another, believed in literally—everyone knows that an aristocracy includes within its ranks many who are stupid, weak or depraved—but it is enacted in the masque, and the one symbolic enactment matches the other. The king or nobleman, seated with his retinue about him in their descending order of function, is the apex of a structure that matches the structure he is watching, and when the masque culminates in a general dance, the two structures blend into one, which in a sense they have been all along. We, who live in societies in which a democratically elected (if we are lucky) executive expresses its (*sc.* our) will through an elaborate bureaucracy, can only understand this notion of power and authority if we go right back and take a bearing from Fustel de Coulanges in *The Ancient City*. "Ancient law was not the work of a legislator; it was on the contrary imposed on the legislator. It had its birth in the family." Similarly, the structure of laws in feudal Europe was the expression of qualities that were supposed by a legal fiction to inhere in the feudal pyramid. So that a masque celebrating some event in the life of a great aristocrat was, by definition, a celebration and a demonstration of those qualities

by which the aristocrat justified his power. So much, by way of rough diagram, for the general nature of the masque. Now to the particular nature of *Comus*.

JOHN, EARL OF BRIDGEWATER, had been appointed President of the Council of Wales, and Lord Lieutenant of Wales and the border counties of England, in 1631. This was a formidable responsibility. The Council of Wales, about 80 in number, included men high in the service of Charles I and also English and Welsh gentlemen who held estates in that part of the world and could administer the law at local level. That Bridgewater was given this high office indicates that he was held in great esteem. It involved residence in Ludlow Castle, and the Earl, who normally resided at Ashridge in Buckinghamshire, took his time about making the move. Not until the summer of 1634 were he and his wife installed at Ludlow, and their three youngest children, left behind during the summer at Ashridge, joined them some months later. Milton's masque was presented on the evening of the day on which Bridgewater formally took office.

This was the basic situation for which Milton had to devise a framework. The story he hit upon was obvious enough, yet completely appropriate. By a pardonable foreshortening of time, he imagines that the three children, journeying from Ashridge to Ludlow, are arriving that very evening; that they undergo trials and dangers on the way, which they surmount by showing the aristocratic virtues of courage and self-command, and that at the culmination of the masque they step out of the picture-frame and are presented as real children to their real father and mother. It is a charming plan, and Milton carries it out charmingly. *Comus* is, of course, lightweight by comparison with most of Milton's work. It has not the piercing beauty of *Lycidas*, let alone the volcanic power of *Paradise Lost* or the granite authority of *Samson Agonistes*. But it is a perfect example of Milton's lifelong ability to take an established *genre* and, without bending it into an unrecognisable shape, put his signature firmly on it. *Comus* has all the features of a masque, yet it is Milton's masque and no one else's. And of all extant masques it is the most literary. A large proportion of its energy is pumping through the language.

But now we shift focus again. In the background is the masque tradition; in the middle ground is the official occasion for which *Comus* was written. But in the foreground is a real family, living a real life with its attendant problems, and there are signs that in writing *Comus* Milton may have felt himself very closely meshed with the situation. To get a grip on it, we must go back a couple of generations.

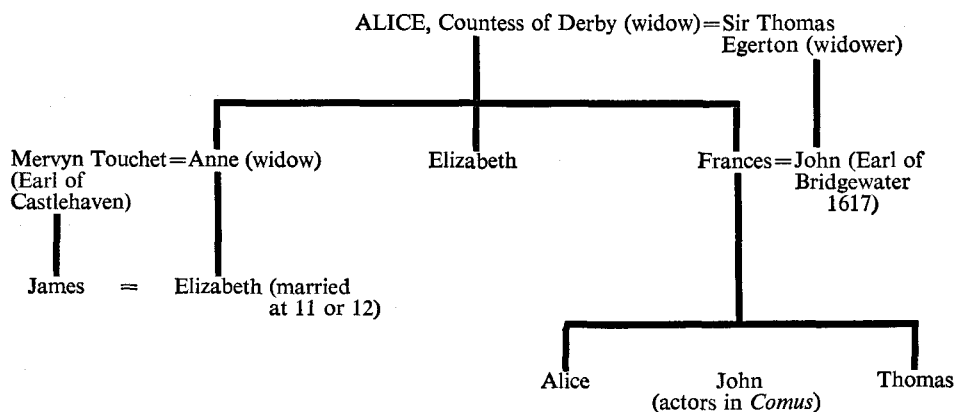
MANY YEARS EARLIER, in the days of Elizabeth I, Edmund Spenser dedicated one of his poems, *The Teares of the Muses*, to his young kinswoman and friend Alice, Lady Strange. Her husband, Fernando, Lord Strange, was a man of letters in his own right, and took besides a deep interest in the theatre, maintaining a company of actors, "Lord Strange's Players." On the death of his father in 1593, Fernando Strange became Earl of Derby; and Alice retained the title of "Countess of Derby" throughout her subsequent widowhood, remarriage, and second widowhood.

married Mervyn Touchet, *alias* Lord Audley, the Earl of Castlehaven. Touchet/Audley was a widower with six children, of whom the eldest, James, in 1628 married Elizabeth, one of Anne's four children by her first marriage. A family tree will make all plain.

Once again the loose ends were neatly tucked in, and if any children resulted from this latter union, they would be both great-grandchildren and step-great-grandchildren to the redoubtable old lady at Harefield.

Sir John Egerton was a man of importance. He was created Earl of Bridgewater in 1617; still higher honour was destined for him, but for the present, he and his family lived semi-privately at Ashridge, not far (some 16 miles) from Harefield.

We have therefore to think of these two aristocratic households, within easy reach of each other, populated by one of those intricately interconnected families that abound in the English ruling class: everybody was everybody else's cousin, niece, uncle, step-grandson, etc.,



The couple, who resided at their country house in Harefield, on the borders of Middlesex and Buckinghamshire, had three daughters. Fernando died, one year after succeeding to the title, and in 1600 Alice married Sir Thomas Egerton, a man who had served the Derby family for some years as their legal adviser. In that same year, Alice's second daughter married Sir Thomas Egerton's son John: so that the children of that marriage were simultaneously the grandchildren and step-grandchildren of the senior couple.

Another of Alice's daughters, Anne, was widowed (at what date I do not know, nor the name of her husband, and I shall refrain from looking them up because the story is already becoming highly involved), and in 1624 this Anne

etc. John Egerton and his wife produced four sons and eleven daughters. Four children died in infancy, but eleven remained, and quickly grew up to the age at which they could form fresh alliances with nobility and wealth.

All this amounts to a formidable power-structure, but it was an intellectual and artistic structure as well. John Egerton's children were musical. To encourage their gifts he took on as music teacher to the household no less a musician than Henry Lawes; when we do not know, but it was before 1627, because Lady Mary Egerton, who had been one of Lawes's charges, got married in that year. Through Lawes, the family had an open avenue to the world of music and drama. It was the heyday of the masque, and

Lawes had been much involved in masques, with their equal demand on composer, poet, actor, scenic designer, painter, singer, instrumental performer. He not only wrote music for masques, but performed in them. He had been seen in two masques by Ben Jonson, two by Aurelian Townshend, and one each by Shirley and Carew. In some of these masques he had acted alongside his young charges of the Egerton family. They had a friendly relationship—not merely master and pupils, but collaborators in dashing and stylish (if somewhat improvisatory) works of art.

All, then, was reasonably sunny on the Harefield-Ashridge side of the family. On the Castlehaven side there were deep shadows. Mervyn Touchet was a bad lot. His sexual tastes were decidedly seamy and he had no hesitation in gratifying them by the use of every kind of power including violence. He compelled not only his wife but her twelve-year-old daughter, bride of his own son, to take part in group sexual activities, of just about every imaginable kind, involving the servants and anyone else who happened to be on the scene, including a whore calling herself Blandida, who took up residence in his house for some six months. Finally the whole matter was dragged to light. In April 1631 the Earl of Castlehaven was tried, convicted of rape and sodomy, and forthwith executed.

Naturally these events were much talked of, and naturally also the effect on the families concerned was painful in the extreme. Each branch of the clan reacted in its own way. The Castlehaven family made an unavailing effort to get Touchet pardoned. The Bridgewater family maintained a dignified silence. Though John Egerton was a member of the Privy Council and therefore wielded exceptional influence, he seems to have made no attempt to intervene on Castlehaven's behalf. Evidently he accepted his kinsman's guilt. During the relevant period he is not on record as having attended any Privy Council meeting, nor was he present at Castlehaven's trial. Doubtless he was licking his wounds in private, the wounds to his family pride and aristocratic code of behaviour.

The Earl of Bridgewater and his wife could take refuge in silence. Not so the old lady at Harefield. On her, the effect of the Castlehaven revelations was one of deep grief and shock. She gathered her other three grand-daughters by Anne into the protection of her household, but she would not take Elizabeth, the girl who had been involved in the scandal, nor would she take her own daughter,

the girl's mother. The King had not yet pardoned them. In any case, the girl ought to go back to her husband and start life with him anew. One thing was certain: after such experiences, Elizabeth was no fit companion for the children she, the Countess, was looking after. To Viscount Dorchester, His Majesty's Secretary of State, Alice wrote several letters in 1631, describing herself as one "whose heart is almost wounded to death", and discussing with him the question of what should be done with Anne and Elizabeth Audley. The old Countess still has hopes of their reclamation, praying that

neither my daughter nor she will ever offend either God or His Majesty again by their wicked courses, but redeem what is past, by their reformation and newness of life.

But as for letting Elizabeth Audley join her sisters in the house at Harefield, that would not do at all:

I am fearful lest there should be some sparks of my grandchild Audley's misbehaviour remaining, which might give ill example to the young ones which are with me.

In November of that year, the King pardoned Anne Audley and her daughter Elizabeth. The old Countess at Harefield could take some comfort from that fact. But the shock had been grievous, and her family must have wanted to do what they could for her.

JOHN MILTON NOW ENTERS the story. One summer evening, the Countess was presented with an entertainment by "some Noble persons of her Family." These scions paid homage to the old dame in her seat of state by means of a procession interrupted by a speech from "the Genius of the wood", and by two exquisite lyrics. Both lyrics and speech were by the young Milton, who printed them in his *Poems* of 1645. The verse is light and delicate in rhythm, agreeably sonorous with vowel-music, in every way fitting for a summer evening, a beautiful garden and a family celebration. The "song" that concludes the entertainment shows that Milton could imitate Shakespeare while remaining his own man.

*O're the smooth enameld green  
Where no print of step hath been,  
Follow me as I sing,  
And touch the warbled string.  
Under the shady roof  
Of branching Elm Star-proof,  
Follow me,*

*I will bring you where she sits,  
Clad in splendor as befits  
Her deity.  
Such a rural Queen  
All Arcadia hath not seen.  
Nymphs and Shepherds dance no more  
By Sandy Ladons Lillied banks.  
On old Pycæus or Cyllene hoar,  
Trip no more in twilight ranks,  
Though Erymanth your loss deplore,  
A better soyl shall give ye thanks.  
From the stony Maenalus,  
Bring your Flocks, and live with us,  
Here ye shall have greater grace,  
To serve the Lady of this place.  
Though Syrinx your Pans Mistres were,  
Yet Syrinx well might wait on her.  
Such a rural Queen  
All Arcadia hath not seen.*

We do not know the date of *Arcades*. Milton's modern biographer Mr W. R. Parker assigns it on grounds of probability to 1630 or even 1629. Both dates put it well before the catastrophe of the Castlehaven scandal. I could wish for the unearthing of some document that would put it a year or two later, after the storm had broken over that venerable head. The fullness of compliment, the assurance that she was unshakably a "rural queen", most fit to rule over the realms of pastoral, would take on a beauty, if they were intended as consolation and support, that as a merely formal tribute they necessarily lack.

Still, whatever the date, *Arcades* was clearly the occasion of Milton's relationship with the family of John Egerton. Doubtless the intermediary was Henry Lawes. Since Milton's father was a connoisseur of music and something of a composer, it need not perplex us that Lawes knew the Milton family. It is also quite possible that John Milton's budding fame as a poet, a fame that took root first in Cambridge but might easily spread to a circle of acquaintances in London, had come to Lawes's ears independently. In any case, we may take it that Lawes invited Milton to collaborate on *Arcades*, and that Milton went to Harefield to see (or even take part in?) the entertainment. There he would meet and work with the "noble Persons of her family" who were the actors and singers. Would the party include Anne and Elizabeth Audley? Or were they at this time immured in Castlehaven's lair, acting out his fantasies with Blandida and the rest of the crew?

THE COUNTESS OF DERBY died in January 1637. Whatever the trials of her life, it is a pleasant thought that she was the object of tributes by both Spenser and Milton. (If it could only be

proved that somewhere along the line she was the subject of one of Shakespeare's sonnets, the circle would be complete.) And in the year of her death Milton was once more drawn into the circle of her family. Lawes, needing to put on something much more elaborate than *Arcades* and to put it on in Ludlow Castle, remembered the beautifully polished verse Milton had turned in on the former occasion. He invited him once more to write something for the Egerton family and to share to that extent in its life. There would be consultations, rehearsals, and beyond all doubt a visit to Ludlow.

The circumstances, however, were different. Even if *Arcades* was well before the Castlehaven scandal, *Comus* was after it. Elizabeth Audley, who had been eleven years old when all this happened to her, was fifteen now. And her cousin and exact contemporary, Alice Egerton, was to be the main female performer in the masque Milton and Lawes were devising.

IT IS THIS, SURELY, that explains the emphasis Milton decided to put on the virtue of chastity. To most of us nowadays, his decision would not need to be explained. We think of him as the austere, not to say grim, poet of Puritanism, very suspicious of pleasure and self-indulgence of any kind. But the young Milton had not yet so decisively adopted this stance. He was, certainly, a serious and studious young man, and of blameless life. (In boyhood, he had been destined for Holy Orders, and he had not yet renounced that intention. He never did, indeed, formally renounce it; his view would be that the Church left him, rather than that he left the Church.) But as a poet he delighted in the rich sensuousness of the Renaissance, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. His favourite poets were the Latin elegiac love poets, who entertained no high opinion of chastity. He was a musician, a swordsman, a good dancer, handsome, attracted by female beauty. The Milton we see in our mind's eye wrote *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*, not *Comus*.

The three young people he imagines making their adventurous journey, to be played by the fifteen-year-old girl and her brothers of eleven and nine, face dangers and temptations. But, out of the wide variety of dangers and temptations they might have met with, Milton specifically chose the sexual. It may be that he went a little too far for the tone of the occasion. Certainly the

A similar cut occurs in lines 697-700. After Cornus has presented himself to the Lady in the guise of a humble swain, and offered to lead her to a humble but safe habitation, she puts herself in

his hands and we next see her not in a cottage but "a stately Palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness; soft Musick, Tables spread with all dainties." The Lady, surrounded by Comus and his rabble, is powerless to rise from her enchanted chair. This is already quite strong symbolism; he has power over her body, and it is up to her mind to resist him. In the course of the exchange that follows, she says to him:

*Hast thou betrai'd my credulous innocence  
With visor'd falshood, and base forgery,  
And wouldst thou seek again to trap me here  
With lickerish baits fit to ensnare a brute?*

The Bridgewater MS. gives only the first of those four lines. Perhaps the other three laid too much emphasis on the precise nature of Comus's intentions. "Lickerish", in particular, had the specific meaning of "lecherous." Somebody (we can only conjecture who) decided that Lady Alice had better not speak so openly of what they were all thinking. For everyone present must have thought, as the action unfolded, of that real-life Comus, lurking in the dark forest of family history, who had had his way with just such a girl as this, a girl of the same age and the same family as she whom they were watching.

AT THIS POINT, conjecture takes over: but the kind of conjecture that no imaginative person can help making. Dr Breasted, as a scholar should, confines her essay almost entirely to ascertaining the facts. But even she cannot resist, at one point, wading into the waters of conjectural interpretation. "By idealizing these last three unmarried Egerton children and their relationship with their parents", she writes, "Milton invites us to regard the masque as a ritual purification of the entire family." This is cautious; the words "invites us to regard" keep the question within the normal bounds of literary criticism; yet it conveys, to me at least, that Dr Breasted thinks of Milton, pacing the country lanes and meditating a theme for *Comus*, saying to himself, "The Bridgewater family, eh? What that lot need is a good ritual purification."

What, indeed, were Milton's feelings about the Castlehaven scandal? Did he breathe a sigh of relief when Mervyn Touchet went to the block, thinking that from now on England would be a cleaner place? Did he feel a deep pity for the old Countess at Harefield in her affliction? Or did the experience, on the contrary, sow the seeds of doubt and suspicion in his mind? Was Elizabeth

Audley invited to Ludlow? After all, if the King had pardoned the girl, it would not be seemly for a member of the Privy Council to ostracise her. Did Milton meet her, and if he did, what did they find to say to each other? What thoughts went through their minds? (This seems to me better material for an historical novel about Milton than anything that went into Robert Graves's little anti-Miltonic phantasmagoria, *Wife to Mr Milton*.)

Be all this as it may, in any attempt to reconstruct the life of Milton, *Comus* provides a vital hinge. Before it, Milton is a gifted schoolboy and undergraduate, already widely read, already conscious of superior powers and exceptional gifts; a child of the comfortable middle class, living (materially) a rather sheltered life within an approving and admiring family circle. His father, indeed, was worried about the son's decision to give his life to poetry, and some friction arose between them, alluded to with frankness in *Ad Patrem*; but, on the whole, it had been a boyhood and youth devoted to learning, amassing information and ideas and enjoying the arts, within the security of a family circle. Ahead lay the black and stormy seas, the agonising decisions, the lonely toil, the tragic disappointments and disillusiones. But for this moment, the sun shone warmly. Milton had emerged from his comfortable but rather limited *milieu*; he was mixing with people of importance, people who made momentous decisions, which to a young man is wonderfully interesting and stimulating; he was also mixing with people whose artistic sensibilities were as cultivated as his own—whereas at Cambridge, we may well conjecture, he had mixed chiefly with men who had plenty of reading but not much else. As a developing artist, young enough to be growing very fast, he must have felt warmed and encouraged by the knowledge that his prowess at his chosen art had won him a place in this larger, more magnificent, more important world.

Not that this kind of support was then, or is now, essential to the producing of great art. The greatest art can grow in loneliness and sorrow. But surely every artist needs one period in his life, even a short one, when he can feel that he is in the right place at the right time. The Milton of *Samson Agonistes* is a greater poet than the Milton of *Comus*. (The post-Romantic doctrine that poets do their best work in youth and then "go off" was unknown to him as it was unknown to Shakespeare.) But the poet of *Samson* must

often have thought back to the young man who wrote *Comus*, and thought of him as someone exceptionally fortunate, a gifted and protected being on whom life had so far rained only gifts. "He plays yet, like a young prentice the first day, and is not yet come to his task of melancholy." To this young man, standing in the sunshine, the deep and tragic questions had not yet presented themselves: Whose hands are fit for power? How shall a nation govern itself? How far should conscience trim itself to a legitimate authority, and when does authority cease to be legitimate? All these questions met Milton head-on before many more years had passed, and he did not flinch from them. The struggle cost him eyesight, health, leisure, friends, everything except life itself. For twenty years he was silent as a poet—he, who had spent his first three decades in preparation for the writing of poetry. When the Restoration came and his hopes of a theocentric republican form of government were finally overthrown, we can only be glad that Restoration England was not the kind of place where, once a political faction is put down, its adherents are rounded up and shot in batches. Milton's life was evidently in the balance for some time, but it was spared, and as a result we have *Paradise Lost* and *Samson*. (There is a political moral here. A régime based on the slaughter-house loses a lot of art as well as a lot of everything else.)

WHEN THE YOUNG MILTON enjoyed the shelter of Ludlow Castle and the society it housed, he was assenting to, and cooperating with, an *ancien régime* that was fated not to last much longer. Indeed, he, with his whole-hearted support of the commonwealth, was to be one of the people who brought it down. That decision was a dark and tragic one, and what it cost Milton is not to be lightly conjectured, unless we have the arrogance to believe ourselves qualified to plumb the mind of a great poet with ease.

And such thoughts naturally bring us round to Yeats again. When Yeats spoke of writing for people he liked and therefore having an audience about the size of that for the first night of *Comus*, he was consciously aligning himself with the Milton who wrote for the Egertons. Not that Lady Gregory had that kind of importance or that kind of wealth! Coole Park was not a notable estate, even by Anglo-Irish standards; there was never much money there, and its

closing years were a sad struggle, against hopeless odds, to keep it together.

At the time Yeats met Augusta Gregory, he was exhausted and ill from years of toil and frustration. She took him to Coole Park, nursed him back to health, and provided him with a home there as long as she ran the place. Further, she helped him by bringing him into the cottages of her tenants, and plugging him in to a source of tradition and folk-lore that Yeats, whose own background was mainly urban, would probably not have found for himself. He repaid her friendship in some of his finest work. It was a loyalty that never wavered; Yeats did not, like Milton, have to face the crisis of an ideological parting of the ways. To him, the social and political set-up which produced families like the Gregorys was in line with his views on society generally. On the other hand, he had to endure the slow agony of watching everything he loved go down. After the Republican government took over, the social function of the landed gentry was no more; they could survive only with large independent resources, and these the Gregorys did not have. Coole was poor soil, the house was quite an ordinary house, and the only feature of the estate that made it valuable, in material terms, was that Lady Gregory's husband had been a great planter; he had grown many trees, including some rare species, and when finally the estate had to be sold, a government department bought it for the sake of the trees, and let the house fall down.

Yeats, of course, had seen it coming, had looked ahead to the time

*When all those rooms and passages are gone;  
When nettles wave above a shapeless mound  
And saplings root among the broken stone.*

ALL THIS LEAVES PROBLEMS that are still unsolved, problems of the social relationships of art. The modish view nowadays is that such a tradition as Yeats found, and cherished, among the Anglo-Irish country gentry is useless and worse; it isolates the artist and cuts him off from communion with the One True God—namely, Demos. This view is as unsatisfactory as modish views generally are, especially since most of the theorists who worship Demos most shrilly are essentially nurslings of bureaucracy who have no sympathy with the common man and wouldn't know how to talk to him. And yet, one has a certain sympathy with the young poet of middle-class background who tries to dress, talk, and generally act like "a

worker" and is always looking for barricades. At least he feels, obscurely, that some need in our present culture is not being satisfied. He wants to be in touch with some source of power that he feels to be lacking in the bureaucratic structure of the modern state. Who can blame him? If Milton and Lawes were collaborating today, they would be putting on some colossal top-heavy production at Covent Garden, with the money coming from the Arts Council. Does anyone genuinely feel that this would be as good as the arrangement they actually had? And if Yeats's relationship with the Gregorys was already obsolete in his time and more so in ours, where is the relationship with a Trade Union or a Commune or a Writers' Workshop that is enabling a poet to do work of anything like that quality now?

Politics, and not only direct governmental politics, is the art of the possible. Living as we do amid a fury of egalitarianism, it would be useless to try to canvass any support for the idea that a poet's work could actually be *improved* by mixing on equal terms with a social class that admitted art into its way of life, one with enough leisure to cultivate the arts and take an interest in them. All we could hope to establish, and that grudgingly, would be that the poet might, in some circumstances, escape being fatally flawed by such contact. So it is probably for my own pleasure, rather than in the hope of convincing anyone, that I quote the wise remarks of C. S. Lewis on the situation of the courtly poet (*Studies in Words*, 1960, p. 23):

The court takes from the class below it talented individuals—like Chaucer, say—as its entertainers and assistants. We ordinarily think of Chaucer learning his courtesy at court. And no doubt he did; its manners were more graceful than those of his own family. But can we doubt that he also taught courtesy there? By expecting to find realised at court the paradigm of courtesy and nobility, by writing his poetry on the assumption that it was realised, such a man offers a critique—and an unconscious critique—of the court's actual *ethos*,

which no one can resent. It is not flattery, but it flatters. As they say a woman becomes more beautiful when she is loved, a nobility by status will become more "noble" under such treatment. Thus the Horaces, Chaucers, Racines, or Spensers substantially ennoble their patrons. But also, through them, many graces pass down from the aristocracy into the middle class. This two-way traffic generates a culture-group comprising the choicest members of two groups that differ in status. If this is snobbery, we must reckon snobbery among the greatest nurseries of civilisation. Without it, would there ever have been anything but wealth and power above and sycophancy or envy below?

Something of this ideal, albeit turned upside down, may underlie the modern young poet's emotional need to blend with the working class: the ideal of a culture-group that takes in the most gifted individuals from two contiguous areas. If so, it is another mark of that deep need to identify with, and draw strength from, something more vital, more organic, more instinctual than a merely bureaucratic structure. Indeed, everywhere I look I see this need. "The Tip, Burnley, Lancashire", is the address of a group called "The Welfare State", who describe themselves as Civic Magicians. Their aim is to bring back a sense of ritual into our lives; they will supply festivals to order; their manifesto draws on the kind of ideas made familiar in Frazer's *Golden Bough*, just as *The Waste Land* did half a century ago.

SO THE FIRST NIGHT of *Comus* turns out to be a rich theme for meditation, as one suspected it would, even though it was an entertainment put on in one place for one night, celebrating an event in the history of one family, and for only as many people as could get into one large room. Some of the conditions were present, it seems, that go to make great art. And in the cement warren of our stratified society, the search for those conditions goes on, because the need for something more living persists: for the personal relationship that enriches art, for the roots going down into the instinctual and primitive, for a victory of the men over the machines.



## Column

IT WAS A RELIEF to leave London for Wales at Christmas-time, even though on my first evening in Wales, I found myself under violent attack from a Welsh Nationalist, on the ground that I had sold my birthright for a mess of pottage because I have chosen to write in English instead of Welsh. In spite of this, which is the kind of reception to which I have become accustomed from what are called the educated Welsh middle classes, I still felt glad that I had escaped from that strange, protracted, aimless holiday with which the English, in London at least, had this year chosen to celebrate the birth of Christ. Perhaps it was good that they had something to celebrate, because there was certainly very little else to make them lift up their hearts and sing. One could not help being struck by the ironies of a situation in which a once-great people, at the end of one of the most calamitous years in their history, had chosen to commemorate the birthday of a Saviour in which few of them believed with a ten-day holiday they had not earned, and, as it appeared, they did not even enjoy.

If there is a vice of which the English are guilty today, it is not among those of which they are commonly accused. It is not hypocrisy, it is not idleness, it is not arrogance or contempt for lesser breeds without the law. It is, rather, a kind of fundamental frivolity, which inhibits them from recognising the seriousness of their situation, as if they were all, man, woman and child, French aristocrats of the *ancien régime* on the eve of the Revolution, or Viennese of the Hapsburg Empire for whom everything was hopeless but not serious. It is the kind of frivolity which makes for fiddling while Rome burns; John Bull has become Nero.

In saying this, I have no sense of conveying some new and startling insight. The habit of frivolity has been with us for so long that somehow we all accept it, but perhaps it has also become so congenital and ingrained that by now we hardly notice it. Perhaps here I may be allowed to quote from myself, writing fourteen years ago in the special issue of *ENCOUNTER* edited by Arthur Koestler, and appropriately entitled *Suicide of a Nation* (July 1963). "We appear to be incurably frivolous, and to believe that the well-tried methods of the past will be sufficient to carry us through the present. It may seem curious to name frivolity as a characteristic vice of our

sad island today. But this is not the frivolity of the *chasse au bonheur*, which after all is a serious matter; it is the frivolity of people who will not take serious matters seriously, because they somehow believe that they do not really apply to them."

Such words, I think, are true now, as they were true then, only now it is fourteen years later. The burden of the message which *Suicide of a Nation* tried to convey was that, in 1963, in the full flood of the Swinging Sixties, Britain was in the course of a crisis which "if it is not overcome within the not very distant future, will lead to a permanent decline." It seems rather touching to think that, in 1963, one really did believe and hope that there were measures open to us which would avert that ominous "permanent decline." But if they existed, they were certainly not taken, so that all that remains to us is to try and accommodate ourselves to the position we have reached fourteen wasted and irretrievable years later. And even that, I suppose, would not be intolerable if only there were signs that we had learnt anything at all from our experiences since World War II.

ALAS, ALL THE SIGNS POINT in the opposite direction. They are so familiar that I do not need to enumerate them here. But I must confess that even I, returning from Wales to London, felt a dreadful sickness of the heart at the announcement that our Prime Minister, Mr James Callaghan, was now about to take a direct and personal interest in the management of our economic and financial affairs. I really cannot think of a more sinister augury for the New Year.

It seems to me to cancel at one stroke any advantages we might have hoped to derive from our enormous borrowings from the International Monetary Fund or the support for sterling which has been provided by the central banks. The representatives of the IMF, or of the central banks, if they do not want their money to be wasted, should take the first plane back to London and beg Mr Callaghan, please, to keep his hands off the British economy.

Mr Callaghan is, no doubt, a very experienced and adroit politician, and he has a rather amiable streak of cowardice in his character which has greatly endeared him to his Cabinet colleagues. There is something about him which reminds me of M. Edouard Daladier, the pre-war Prime Minister of France, once famous as the *Bull of Vauchuse*, who when the moment of decision came turned out to be rather more like one of those miserable beasts which take the part of the bull in those parodies of a bull fight which are (or once were) highly popular in the South of France.

But whatever his skills and arts as a politician, Mr Callaghan is, by training, experience, tem-

perament and knowledge, as little qualified for the management of any economy, much less a national one, as the first man one might pick out at random in the street. Indeed, in one sense, rather less so; for the victim of some such random choice might at least be expected to feel some humility in thinking of the magnitude of the tasks presented to him compared with the extent of his own ignorance. Mr Callaghan has no such feelings. Out of a strong field, he comes out an easy and universal favourite as the worst Chancellor of the Exchequer we have had since the War. This seems merely to have increased rather than diminished his confidence that he is now the man to direct our economic affairs. Sometimes, thinking of Mr Callaghan, I feel like broadcasting to my fellow countrymen that desperate message (whose was it?) in the *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*: "Fly for your lives! The game is up. . . ."

WHEN, PRECISELY, DID Britain cease to be a Great Power, because, after all, we all know that she is no longer one? We are so used to thinking of Britain's decline as an infinitely gradual and protracted historical process, like the slow erosion of some granite cliff face, that such a question hardly seems to have any meaning. Yet it is to this question, among many others, that Professor John Lukacs addresses himself in his new book, *The Last European War*.<sup>1</sup> His answer is that Britain ceased to be a Great Power sometime in the twenty-four hours between 7 and 8 December 1941.

During that time, he thinks, and I am inclined to agree with him, two things happened which fundamentally altered Britain's status in the world, though on the whole very few people realised it. The first (on the afternoon of 7 December) was Marshal Zhukov's counter-attack against the invading Germans which forced Field Marshal von Bock's Army Group Centre to retreat from its most advanced positions before Moscow. The second event (on 8 December) was the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour and the entry of the United States into the war. There is something strangely dramatic in the coincidence, almost to a day, of these two events; and Professor Lukacs is certainly not wrong in thinking that they changed the course of history, and Britain's place in it. Up to that point, Britain had been the only country in the world which had successfully resisted Hitler. She had stood alone, and far from being dependent on anyone else, it was the rest of the world which had depended on her continued

resistance. But after that time she became no more than a useful, though subordinate, ally of the two super-powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, which would henceforward determine the course of history. She was no longer Prince Hamlet, just an attendant lord.

Professor Lukacs' dating of Britain's loss of status as a Great Power is connected with his general thesis that the campaigns of 1939-41 constituted the Last European War, in which Britain, alone, attempted to defend the ancient European system of nation-states. After 1941, with the emergence of the two super-powers as Hitler's principal enemies, it was no longer a European, but a World War, in which Britain could play only a subsidiary role. But by then not only had the participants changed; the nature of the war had itself changed. It was no longer a question of who should rule Europe. It was a question of who should rule the world, and in fact World War II left that question undecided; and it still remains undecided today.

John Lukacs suggests that, in December 1941, Hitler himself realised that it was no longer possible for him to win the War in the form it had now assumed. But if he could not win it, he did not necessarily have to lose it, and might still be able, by forcing a stalemate, to achieve a peace by negotiation. This was of course a false hope. For all his political genius, Hitler did not realise that to the Allies he had become such a figure of evil that any form of negotiation with him was henceforward out of the question. In their eyes he had become, politically and diplomatically speaking, an unperson.

One speaks of Hitler's "genius" because, until the end of 1941, he had scarcely made a single mistake, and had shown himself incomparably superior to any of the politicians who, either from within Germany or from outside it, had tried to restrain his implacable will to power. In all his decisions and actions he had moved, as he himself said, with the uncanny certainty of a *Schlafwandler*, a sleepwalker, who never puts a foot wrong even though he looks neither to right nor to left, before or behind. But after 1941, in the new War of the Super-powers, his magician's gifts deserted him and he could scarcely do anything right.

Professor Lukacs' belief that in December 1941 Hitler knew he could not win the War provokes an interesting speculation. Was it because of this that his gifts deserted him?

In his youthful masterpiece, *The Last Days of Hitler*, Professor H. R. Trevor-Roper has made us familiar with the terrible damage inflicted on Hitler's mind and body by the bizarre and eccentric treatment to which they were subjected by his personal physician, the abominable Dr

<sup>1</sup> *The Last European War: September 1939-December 1941*. By JOHN LUKACS. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £7.95.

Morell. But perhaps the most serious damage had already been done, in December 1941, inflicted not by drugs but by the profound psychic wound he suffered as a result of the knowledge that henceforward History was against him and not for him. To such a person as Hitler, to whom his historical role was all-important, this was as if his whole life had lost its meaning.

In that fateful month of December 1941 Hitler made two vital decisions. The first, that the German Army, instead of retreating to the area of Smolensk, should hold to its advanced positions throughout the winter, once again revealed his superiority to all his advisers. It was the right decision and probably saved the German Army from destruction. The second decision was to approve the "Final Solution" of the Jewish question. This was not only one of the greatest crimes in history; it was also a political mistake, which destroyed any possibility of the compromise peace which was all that Hitler could henceforward hope for. *Quem deus vult perdere, prius dementat.*

★

I WAS FASCINATED by an article by Mr Martin Leighton, called "Journey into the Working Class", which appeared in the *Sunday Times* Weekly Review (January 16). Mr Leighton is of impeccable middle-class origins; in 1975, after experience as Reuter's correspondent, in BBC television, and as a civil servant, he decided, for reasons of his own, to retread George Orwell's Road to Wigan Pier and discover for himself how the working-class lives. He did so the hard way, working as a street-sweeper, a handyman, a maintenance man in a small printing works, all at wages of about £25-£30 a week.

His report on his journey bears little resemblance to the accounts of the working class we are accustomed to read in the press or hear and see on television or radio; but they bear just as little resemblance to the impression we might form from listening to speeches by Mr Jack Jones or Mr Len Murray. Where are the politically militant, strongly unionised, proletarian masses which are the power behind the Social Contract and the Labour Government? Where are the politically conscious working men who are the driving force behind *Tribune* and the left wing of the Labour movement? Where are the shop stewards, the trade union organisers, who devote their lives to improving the lot of their fellow men? On his proletarian journey, Mr Leighton came across none of them, and in the establishments in which he worked they were mostly conspicuous by their absence. His fellow-prole-

tarians were small isolated groups of unskilled or semi-skilled workers, at the lower end of the wage-scale, and employed in plants and factories and businesses of under 200 men, whose chief interest in life was in making their meagre wages last to the week's end and in whatever comradeship and satisfaction they could find in their work.

Politics and trade unionism played no part in their lives. To spend 18p on a sandwich was regarded as a startling extravagance. Their contact with management, from which they were almost totally isolated, took the form of confused and arbitrary orders which were frequently impossible to carry out and were therefore ignored. When, in his printing works, the closed shop made it necessary for maintenance men to join a union, there was no union to join, nor could anyone tell them where to find one. Between Mr Leighton and his mates, the Sid and Fred and Harry whom he so faithfully and realistically describes, and the middle classes there was an unbridgeable gulf, in economic and social status, in life-styles, in mental and emotional attitudes. But it was no greater than the gulf which separated them from the highly organised members of the trade unions or from men like Mr Clive Jenkins or Mr Hugh Scanlon. In a sense one could say that there were no institutions which united them with the rest of society. They inhabited a closed culture of their own, into which only a few adventurous explorers like Martin Leighton ever penetrated from the world outside.

Yet, as Mr Leighton reminds us, they were, and are, as truly and fully representative, numerically and in other ways, of the English working class as the membership of the trade union movement. But they remain almost totally excluded, partly by their own choice, from any effective means of controlling their own destiny. Whether they will continue to endure this situation with the same patience and long-suffering as they have hitherto is doubtful. For myself I believe that it is of vital importance to break down the barriers which divide them from other sections of the community and of their own class; but would not this also involve destroying their own particular virtues?

The annals of the poor are not really either short or simple; but mostly they are unrecorded. My own experience tells me that Mr Leighton's article is a faithful and accurate record of what he found on his journey, and as such it is a valuable addition to such information as we already possess. I very much hope he will expand it into a book. Reading it, I was continually reminded of Henry Green's *Living*, which after nearly fifty years still remains the best novel of English working-class life which we possess.

R

# Wilhelm Weitling

## *The Utopian as Guerrilla—By MELVIN J.*

OF ALL THE MANY turning-points in the history of Marxism—between Marx and Engels on force or the peaceful road to power, between Marx and Lenin on majority or minority rule, between Marx and Mao on the leading role of proletarians or peasants—one of the least remembered and yet perhaps most revealing bifurcation in the first days of the revolutionary movement was between Marx and Wilhelm Weitling (1808–71). It was a personal and bitter quarrel, and the historic divergence illuminates ever more sharply two great traditions of the radical temper.

Looking back from our own contemporary scene, crowded with so many different types of utopian rebels and revolutionary romantics, we are more sensitive to the origins of different styles and different commitments. We know that, among the myriad of Marxian believers, there are (and probably have always been) the Quiet Ones: for all their ideological noisiness (with menaces), they have been as staid, conventional, predictable, as “bourgeois” if you will, as Karl Marx himself. And there have been the Wild Ones: irrational, excessive, spontaneous, indeed as explosive as Wilhelm Weitling. Each has always been attracted to the other, even if ultimately they were doomed to part company and tell devastating truths about their respective political and human weaknesses as servants of the Revolution.

In the beginning, in that seed-time of modern radicalism the 1840s, the youthful Weitling appeared to the young Marx as the very incarnation of a new spirit of European change and world renovation. Not unlike Dante’s messianic medieval Emperor, Weitling’s revolutionary redeemer was to lead the way to the “earthly paradise.” His conception of the luminous figure, half-Christ and half-Bonaparte, Marx found moving, and understandably so. Weitling

was born the illegitimate girl and one of Napoleon of 1838, written for the was later rechristened was entitled *Mankind as*. In his *Gospel of a Pocr* cribed Jesus Christ as illegitimate child; and h in Switzerland of blasph jail.<sup>1</sup> “This earnest an ary”, as Isaiah Berlin has observed, “was the last and most eloquent descendant of the men who raised peasant revolts in the late Middle Ages . . . .”<sup>2</sup> He was perhaps the earliest and most important influence on the proletarianism of Marx and the anarchism of Bakunin; and he had, for a brief historic moment, a foot in both camps.

NO LESS THAN MARX, Bakunin was impressed by that “really remarkable book” of Weitling’s, *Guarantees of Harmony and Freedom*; and he copied out (for Arnold Ruge, a friend of Marx) a striking passage—“The perfect society has no government but only an administrator, no laws but only obligations, no punishments but means of correction.” When they met in Zurich, Bakunin was pleased with his intelligence, energy,

<sup>1</sup> Wilhelm Weitling, *Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit* (1842; ed. Kaufhold, East Berlin 1955); *Evangelium eines armen Sünders* (1843), in *Der Frühsozialismus* (ed. Ramm, 1956). The *Evangelium* has been reprinted as a Rororo “classic text of Socialism and Anarchism” (ed. Schäfer, 1971) together with *Die Menschheit, wie sie ist und wie sie sein sollte*; the former has also been re-published as a “Christian text” by Sheed & Ward as *The Poor Sinner’s Gospel* (tr. Livingstone, 1969).

See, generally, Carl Wittke, *The Utopian Communist* (1950), and A. Barnikol, *Wilhelm Weitling* (1929). There are accounts, with varying degrees of sympathy and hostility, in the following: Franz Mehring, *Karl Marx* (1935); G. D. H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought: The Forerunners*, vol. 1 (1953); Leopold Schwarzschild, *The Red Prussian* (1948); Bertram D. Wolfe, *Marxism* (1965); and Edmund Wilson, *To the Finland Station* (1940).

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah Berlin, *Karl Marx* (1939), p. 109.

THIS ARTICLE is based on a chapter in Melvin J. Lasky’s new book, “Utopia and Revolution”, just published by Macmillan (London) and the University of Chicago Press.

and—"above all"—his "undisciplined fanaticism." Weitling's difficulties with the police soon involved Bakunin. An official Swiss report led to a Tsarist decree depriving Bakunin of his noble rank and property, and to his banishment to Siberia.

If Weitling made Bakunin into a hunted exile, he had also made him into a professional revolutionary. As Bakunin's biographer, Edward Hallett Carr, has underscored, revolution was "a topic to be discussed by intellectuals to the sociable accompaniment of tea and tobacco." Ruge was devoted to the pen, not the sword; Herwegh, as a man of action, was active in writing verses against tyranny. Weitling, the displaced person and uprooted man, burned with personal grievances; and he was angry enough to propose to "shoot without mercy all enemies of communism . . ." As Carr writes:

"Bakunin found in this blend of high-souled idealism and reckless brutality something congenial to his own turbulent nature. . . . The meeting with Weitling was one of the capital events of his life, completing his transformation from a speculative philosopher into a practical revolutionary. The Russian aristocrat became the servant of the international proletariat."<sup>3</sup>

AS FOR Marx and Engels, they soon had their doubts as to how practical and how proletarian Weitling's influence truly was. Their admiration and cooperation was short-lived. Weitling became in their eyes a utopian *à la* Cabet and an insurrectionist *à la* Blanqui. Marx disliked both the dream and the desperation. For the first, he wanted to substitute hope and confidence based on scientific analysis (and not primitive Christian longings for equality and brotherhood); and, for the second, a widely-based movement of the masses. Weitling, in turn, disliked the intellectualism of his new socialist rivals and predicted: "In the end they will devour one another."

The differences in tone and spirit between the philosopher and the journeyman-tailor were clear and unbridgeable. At a dramatic meeting in Brussels (30 March 1846) Marx said that

<sup>3</sup> E. H. Carr, *Michael Bakunin* (1937; 1961), p. 128.

<sup>4</sup> P. V. Annenkov, *The Extraordinary Decade: Literary Memoirs* (1880; ed. Mendel, 1968), pp. 168-70. See also the accounts in Edmund Wilson, *To the Finland Station*, pp. 193-6; David McLellan, *Karl Marx: His Life & Thought* (1973), pp. 155-7; and (in a German rendering of Annenkov's original eye-witness Russian account) *Gespräche mit Marx und Engels* (ed. Enzensberger, 1973), pp. 58-63.

<sup>5</sup> Marx/Engels, *Briefwechsel* (1949), vol. I, pp. 56, 62, 108.

<sup>6</sup> Weitling, *Garantien* (ed. Kaufhold, 1955)—a valuable East Berlin edition which includes all emendations.

"... it was a simple fraud to arouse the people without any sound and considered basis for their activity. The awakening of fantastic hopes . . . would never lead to the salvation of those who suffered, but on the contrary to their undoing. . . . To go to the workers . . . without strictly scientific ideas and concrete doctrine would mean an empty and unscrupulous playing with propaganda, which would inevitably involve, on the one hand, the setting-up of an inspired apostle and, on the other hand, simple asses who would listen to him with open mouths. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

This, he added, might be all very well in Russia; but for the rest one could not do without solid doctrine. (In a later quarrel, the German Communist leader Gottschalk echoed Weitling in his 1849 attack on the Marxists: "They are not in earnest about the salvation of the oppressed. The distress of the workers, the hunger of the poor, have only a scientific doctrinaire interest for them.")

The debate between Marx and Weitling ended with Marx in a rage, pounding on the table, and leaping up with a shout, "Ignorance has never helped anyone yet!"

Time was when young Weitling's theoretical achievement was (in Marx's words) one of "athletic" prowess, a "giant's" step forward, indeed "the incomparable brilliant *début* of the German Worker." Now Engels began to suspect that Weitling, once the author of "work of genius", had been plagiarising from certain French and Russian sources. He reported to Marx his contempt for *Weitlingerei* (as for *Proudhonisterei*) and reassured him that after "the infamy of brother Weitling" the "little clique of tailors was about to be thrown out. . . ."<sup>5</sup> (Edmund Wilson refers to this as "the first Marxist party purge.") Weitling's response was one of bewildered indignation at the "slandorous" charge of being "a reactionary." He had rushed to return from the United States in 1848, but after the failure of the various European revolts he resumed his activity as a propagandist among the American oppressed.

WHAT HE LEFT BEHIND HIM was a revised third edition of his unique manifesto of both utopia and revolution, *Guarantees of Harmony and Freedom*, first published in 1842 and now re-issued in 1849 with all his latest ideas and reconsiderations. The thoughtful utopian in the grip of restless reason tends to revise in the direction of inspired details and new rearrangements. The impassioned revolutionary under the hold of apocalyptic enthusiasm moves ever closer to his imagined final solution. Weitling revised to the left, not the right; and Marxological scholarship (here the East Germans are exemplary) enables us to follow, almost line by line, the Promethean impetus of his last European interpolations.<sup>6</sup>

First, he attempted to clarify a number of misunderstandings. He had indeed cried, "*Es lebe die Revolution!*" but he had no illusions about the previous great events which had brought suffering humanity so little: it was the next one, or, rather the next "series of revolutions", that would make the ultimate difference. He had been called an anti-democrat, but he explained that complete democracy was to be found only in perfect communism. As for his antipathy to national and patriotic sentiments, could this "prison house" really be called a Fatherland and could this enslaved despised rabble be truly taken for a People? When the "old rotten house of the existing social order collapsed" (or was destroyed), there would be a Great Fire into which would be joyously thrown all the paraphernalia of hateful capitalism: banknotes, tax forms, contracts, debtor's notes, the poor man's brass as well as the rich man's silver and gold. "Society will be born anew. . . . The earth will become a paradise and humankind one family."

THEN HE ADDED a number of points from his experiences in the 1840s. An experienced inmate of Swiss and German jails, he now felt the need for an additional revolutionary demand: the liberation of all prisoners from all penitentiaries. An American impression of Negroes groaning under slavery led him to remark: "A lovely freedom, that! The devil take that freedom and that republic!" The experience in England of reading the London newspapers prompted him to say that "no freedom of the press at all would be better. . . ." In connection with his own outline of the new utopian society, he stood by his old statute which called for the closing of the universities during harvest time so that all professors and students could work in the fields; and he reiterated his conception of an ideal lawlessness. No, police and judges and jails would *not* be required; theft is permitted only because by definition it is not *possible*; well, perhaps a book could be stolen, he conceded, but that should only be taken as a kind of little joke at which one could laugh or not. Yet this much should, at least, be noted. Weitling did go on to specify rules for firing squads: certain enemies just had to be eliminated in the new order. His tenderness for humanity did not go so far as to include the abolition of capital punishment for political offenders.<sup>7</sup> It seemed to him to be well within the terms of utopian contract.

<sup>7</sup> Weitling, *Garantien*, p. 361.

<sup>8</sup> Weitling, *Garantien*, pp. xlv, 259-60, 355.

ONE DRASTIC NEW TURN was taken by Weitling, on the eve of his leaving Europe for America in 1849, and it angered Marx and still distresses his Marxist editors today. He announced a great breakthrough in revolutionary theory, a new tactic of so-called *soziale Anarchie*. This went considerably beyond his previous insistence upon the constant sharpening of the social war between masses and classes, went indeed into the very precincts of brigandage and putschism. "He who robs the rich", he announced, "in order to help the poor with the booty, he is a noble righteous robber and a just thief. . . . He who meets his death in such a battle must be seen as a martyr in a holy cause."

Yet he sensed that a Robin Hood ideal was not quite the proper casting for an insurrectionary drama in an increasingly industrial civilisation. It was the masses who had to play the central role, and they had to be "electrified" with all their "emotions and passions", and even their "prejudices." Only then would "our enemy find himself pressed to the extreme, and forced insistently to repression. . . ." The new and original message was of Napoleonic, if not of Messianic proportions:

"Now one lesson must be preached which nobody has dared to utter till now—the lesson which demands that the bloody battlefield of the streets, in which the people are always at a disadvantage, be transformed into continuous guerrilla warfare . . . which the power of the soldiers, gendarmerie, and police will be unable to put down.

But this lesson can only be taught effectively to the most desperate and poverty-stricken urban masses of our big cities. Once the word is out, it will be the signal for a new strategy with which our enemies will never be able to cope."<sup>8</sup>

It is no small part of the odd circular logic of the situation that, having formulated an innovative strategy of urban guerrilla warfare for the metropolitan campaign, Weitling departed for the farmlands of the American Middle West.

ON HISTORICAL BALANCE, Marx and Weitling appear to have scored one important point against each other. As the utopian tailor had surmised, revolutionary intellectuals with only doctrinaire interests in humane values did proceed to "devour one another." As the hardheaded scientific philosopher had argued, "emotional socialism" was neither sound nor stable enough on which to build an effective movement for systematic social change; and Weitling's career in the United States seemed to prove this.

This is not to suggest that Marx's socialism was any less rooted in personal emotions, stable or otherwise, or any less dependent on the "awakening of fantastic hopes." All things considered, it would seem that the illusions of the

utopian socialists were only marginally greater than those of the scientific socialists. By and large, bourgeois society and its middle-class values remained untranscended; capitalism was not led to its collapse either way. Suffering humanity turned neither to the social community of equal brothers nor to the political party of the revolutionary proletariat. The failure of the utopians—since the experimental establishment of an actual community constituted a specific practical test—was merely more dramatic and definitive; the failures of open-ended predictions are harder to establish. “If all had followed me”, Weitling was to confess in America, “as the children of Israel followed Moses out of Egypt, I would have succeeded. . . .” For the followers of Weydemeyer (who had come to New York to defend the views of Marx and Engels), this was only the “fog of fantasy.” The great debate of Brussels raged on.

WEITLING’S original revolutionary impetus distinguished his American activities from those native and immigrant utopias which, in Marx’s indictment, sought for salvation “behind society’s back.” When he came to Communia, Iowa, he said, “For the first time in my life I stand on the sacred soil of a communal brotherhood.” But he never intended to build socialism in one farmland. He explained in the organ of his American movement, *Die Republik der Arbeiter*, that his views were intended for a whole state, indeed for the whole of human society. He lost sight of neither power nor paradise. Communia, with its thousand acres and a handful of brothers, was to be the beginning: when the communities multiplied and the following grew, he could go on to build the Pacific railroad, control the presidential elections, and establish the dream empire.

Meanwhile the *Bund*’s enrolment was planned to grow by a calculated geometrical progression, and its mounting capital resources, based on a

<sup>9</sup> See Carl Wittke’s scholarly biography, *The Utopian Communist*, p. 310 and *passim*. For Karl Kautsky’s objections to “Messianism” and “the dictatorship of a single person”, see his critique of Weitling, Blanqui and the Bolsheviks in *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (1918; 1964), pp. 17–18 ff.

For criticisms of Weitling’s American career (apparently he outraged American abolitionist radicals by not paying sufficient attention to their burning moral issue, i.e. Negro slavery), see Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the U.S.* (1947), pp. 228–30, and especially Herman Schlüter, *Lincoln, Labor and Slavery* (1913), pp. 73–4.

Proudhon-model People’s Exchange Bank, were to undermine the existing capitalist monopolies. “We shall come to power along this road”, he was confident, “if only the leaders will remain steadfast, and the members will accept the leadership and not dissipate their strength through internal factional controversies.” (Weitling became interested in the Orient and in something he called “Chinese socialism”; strangely enough, the revolutionary road to power that he envisaged in America was a curious pre-Maoist version of countryside enclaves enveloping the urban class-enemy, that “babylon of capitalists, merchants, lawyers and preachers [who live] by thievery, fraud, misrepresentation, and hypocrisy. . . .”)

HIS DISILLUSIONMENT was rather less original. He knew that the English would be most unlikely to resort to revolutionary methods, and now in America he was tempted to wish for the old Paris proletariat, so uninhibited by the Anglo-Saxon respect for legalities. Increasingly frustrated and isolated, Weitling became tormented by the “impracticalities” of his reforms and the recalcitrance of his human material: “Everywhere [he wrote] I discover a desire to protect the individual.” By the time of his death in New York in 1871, he had withdrawn from both utopia and revolution and confined himself mostly to patents for ingenious inventions (he always felt the Singer Company had deprived him of his device for a better buttonhole) and to semantical studies for a new world language (which might “trample the monster of national hatreds underfoot”). The bitter irony of his last years was that the journeyman-tailor whose fury had once inflamed the European Communist movement returned to his needle and thread, earning a meagre living by making fancy white waistcoats for such New Yorkers as Astor, Fisk, and Vanderbilt.<sup>9</sup>

One last point. The language of revolution began with Copernicus’ astronomical imagery in *De revolutionibus*, and I cannot help but note Weitling’s attempt to “escape from this disgraceful earth” by turning to the mysteries of the heavens. He corresponded with Herschel, Humboldt, and Agassiz and submitted a paper to the Smithsonian Institution on “rotations and revolutions.” Evidently his new system would restore the earth to the planetary centre which it had occupied in Ptolemaic days. One of his sons had been named Tycho Brahe Edward and another Gracchus Babeuf Robert, and this was indeed the last “dialectical” ambivalence of his revolutionary career.

*Peter Scupham*

## The Hinterland

I

The summer opens where the days draw in.  
Under the heat-haze, polished branches flock  
To idle sound, and through a gauze-green skin  
Cut sun lies lapidary on a book.  
These are the instances a page retrieves:  
A gravel walk, and a tall palisade,  
The action of white light on the sharp leaves,  
Tubbed oranges and lemons, placed and played.  
The conversations of a house withdraw:  
Birds walk among the foliage to uncover  
Time's dark heart in the ash and sycamore  
And all the summers counting lost things over.  
An urgent cipher through a wall of trees:  
Leaves pressing home their small advantages.

II

Leaves pressing home their small advantages  
Beyond the sill, beyond the frayed sash-cords,  
To this close darkness where the dead hold lease,  
Their furniture impalpable as words.  
From a green room they prompt the present play,  
The ebb and flow of blood. Dust-crevices,  
Where life is forced from an old sap. Each day  
Our veins are charged with their impurities  
This summer when the shagged elms tower and die.  
Their played-out torches moulder in each hedge;  
Maintain erect, under a changeless sky,  
Their stumbled footholds and miscarriages.  
August, September, hang their weights upon  
The rim of summer, when great wars begin.

III

The rim of summer, when great wars begin  
And Europe sprawls beneath her cavalries,  
Licking the dust-bowl of a culture clean.  
Ask for a rushlight, or a varlet phrase,  
For woodcut figures cold as anchorites  
In far cells of the mind? The dragon's teeth  
Sown in a picture-book are Naseby fight.  
What is the legacy these bones bequeath?  
They were buried shallow, and the putrid meat  
Soured through the grass, wept the green over  
"So that the cattle were observed to eat  
Those places very close for some years after."  
We fat the dead for our epiphanies,  
But there's a no-man's-land where skull-talk goes.

#### IV

But there's a no-man's-land where skull-talk goes:  
 She sits alone by the declining sea;  
 Winds turn continually upon their course  
 And all their circuits are a vanity.  
 To her slow heart-beat, frosted empires fail—  
 Bone-china bone, the watered eyes half-blind,  
 Dust hair. No living palmistries can spell  
 The bird-runes on the stretched silk of her hand  
 Which knows the loosening of silver cords,  
 Breaking of golden bowls. For her, the dead  
 Are a thrown captain on a sepia horse,  
 An old man with a nonsense at his head:  
     Culled shades hob-nobbing where the airs are thin,  
     A hinterland to breed new summers in.

#### V

A hinterland to breed new summers in,  
 And an old August working in the bones  
 Of children barefoot in a Northern town  
 Where windows speak in a long monotone,  
 All their black waters running deep. The ways  
 To washstand, jug and basin are dark shut:  
 Light climbs up to a silver bar, and stays.  
 Our children freeze; their urchin gestures cut  
 To crowded scarecrows on a cobbled field.  
 Their capped heads and their runnelled hands are full  
 With all our violence, and the stone is held  
 Which cannot fall; flung out, a dull arc pulls  
     The locked sun down the road where elms turn brown:  
     The unfleshed dead refusing to lie down.

#### VI

The unfleshed dead refusing to lie down:  
 The favoured ones, the ephemeridae  
 Who knew the enchantments of the lost domain  
 And made a switchback of the ancient hay,  
 Who played about the Rector's sleeves of lawn,  
 Who won the Craven or the Nightingale,  
 For whom the bright Edwardian summer shone,  
 For whom Death was the Keeper of the Wall:  
 "The sons of men, snared in an evil time",  
 Whose luck ran out, whose claim was disallowed—  
 The poplars all are felled: not spared, not one—  
 Who lies in France under a criss-cross shroud?  
     A great space, and young voices echoing.  
     What inch of sunlight gilds their vanishings?

## VII

What inch of sunlight gilds their vanishings,  
The harvests of our crooked scythes and spades?  
“Huge, statuesque, silent, but questioning”—  
Nobody, on his casqued and white parade,  
Who left a name, a card, some ribboned bronze,  
A song uncaptured by anthologies,  
Whose flesh was eaten “till the very bones  
Opened the secret garments of their cartilages,  
Discovering their nakedness and sorrow.”  
One with all spun and all the spinning leaves,  
The sift of man held close in field and barrow.  
The eyes confuse: that rank and file of graves,  
Those dragon’s teeth, those nests the birds have flown,  
Those penitential litanies of stone.

## VIII

Those penitential litanies of stone—  
A prophylactic wreath lies bleaching there,  
Washed by the sun, the interceding rain—  
A granite finger to recruit each year  
The dead, to whom two minutes can be spared  
To make their speeches on the common ground,  
To hear the feet withdraw, the hard flags bared,  
The terrible trumpets for lost Rolands, wound  
About the thinning heads of those who stand  
Gathered and set apart, themselves the dead,  
The citizens of the corrupted land,  
The handful of old dust, the new seed-head,  
The may, the blackthorn, the November trees:  
A silence runs beneath these silences.

## IX

A silence runs beneath these silences  
Where the shut churches founder in the green,  
And all their darkness and their brightness is  
One seamless robe to lap the creature in.  
Bone-chamber, tumulus, the field of skulls:  
The folded hands, and the high blackened helm,  
Where honour and dishonour share the rolls  
And night plays rook about the stiffening elms.  
Here each arrival, each new harvesting,  
Deepens the ripples in a strengthening pool:  
The troubled fountain and corrupted spring  
Find waters which must scarify to heal.  
Let the tree lie where the tree is felled,  
And there our conversations must be held.

X

And there our conversations must be held,  
Behind the lettered spines, the faded boards,  
Where a plain text of living is distilled  
And old exemplars must correct new words,  
Who saw the rose, sprung from its cloven hood,  
Begin to put on darkness and decline,  
Who knew the outworn faces and the weeds,  
The vanity, the striving after wind;  
Who spoke for those who set their hearts in print,  
The pulped trees, and the drab who hawked the rags,  
The baffled cattle waiting to be skinned,  
The blow-fly's roundel on the vellum page.  
Each book the substance and the shadow. Lives  
Where blood and stone proclaim their unities.

XI

Where blood and stone proclaim their unities  
Under the topsoil vagaries of green  
Works the slow jostle of the small debris:  
The ruins of the Glacial Drift begin,  
Driving the golden horns, the feathered shales  
Over each crevice of the lost domain,  
Making the way straight where the Blue Gault falls  
To Greensand and her seams of Ironstone.  
The skies are wind: spoil by a ruffled pool.  
A perched farm blossoms on its ancestries.  
Time's face exposed: the quickening muscles pull  
Five fingertips across the centuries,  
Poised where the bedrock widens a dull gold  
And all the shadows cross on one high field.

XII

And all the shadows cross on one high field:  
A latter violence working in the grain,  
The cockpit tangling on the shrouded hill,  
The hangars closed, and the bent grass at noon  
Twelve o'clock high. Bandit and Angel stand  
And cool their wing-tips in a molten sun  
Of Kentish fire, their long trails wound and fanned  
Against a sky which cannot take the stain,  
The lost crews working home against the wind,  
Against new traffics and discoveries.  
The elms are singled, failing one by one:  
Earth entertains new archaeologies,  
Rehearsing each indignity of pain  
Behind the parched leaves glistening in the lane.

### XIII

Behind the parched leaves glistening in the lane  
Shade furs the cupboard rooms: heat piles a house  
Of shapeless blocks where metal colours run.  
Under a melting sickness, the obtuse  
And ogreish language of a troubled sky  
Flaps out its cloth of white and violet:  
A speech where all the images elide  
To pain of darkness and the pain of light  
Till all the curtains rise, the whipped bough throws  
A spray of ghosts across the hollow square:  
A furious thickening in meshed foliages,  
Blown droplets tingling as the flesh lies bare.  
    The gathered waters drive for earth again,  
    Diminished thunders breaking in new rain.

### XIV

Diminished thunders breaking in new rain  
And the rooms woken from a kind of dream,  
The text and textures of their ground-work plain.  
Calling each creature by its proper name  
The conversations of a house unfold  
One unremitting labour, which sustains  
The open page, child's play and marigold,  
The course the light sets in the hidden veins.  
About the enclave of their pool, fish move  
Across the shaken faces and the trees;  
And through the air's refreshment, all the leaves  
Are congregating new-found silences.  
    The chapter closes where the words begin:  
    The summer opens where the days draw in.

### XV

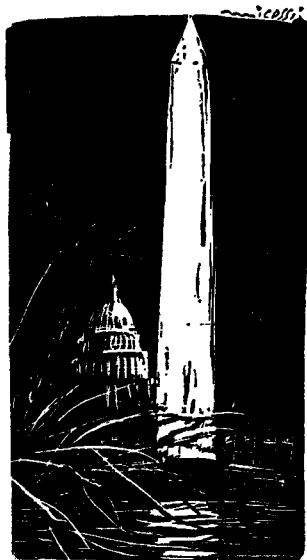
The summer opens where the days draw in,  
Leaves pressing home their small advantages:  
The rim of summer, when great wars begin.  
But there's a no-man's-land, where skull-talk goes,  
A hinterland, to breed new summers in.  
The unfleshed dead, refusing to lie down—  
What inch of sunlight gilds their vanishings,  
Those penitential litanies of stone?  
A silence runs beneath these silences,  
And there our conversations must be held,  
Where blood and stone proclaim their unities  
And all the shadows cross on one high field.  
    Behind the parched leaves glistening in the lane,  
    Diminished thunders, breaking in new rain.

## AMERICAN CHRONICLE

### After the Bicentennial

## The Last Hurrah?

By Ferdinand Mount



THE CELEBRATION was, by all accounts, unforced, unordered, homely, individual. The Tall Ships sailing up the Hudson, the pioneer wagon-trains converging on Washington, Queen Elizabeth's visit—these official spectacles were only strings of bunting flapping above the private junketing. There are, after all, no prescribed forms for a Bicentennial. What

is being celebrated is too fluid, too open-ended to be encapsulated and rounded off in ritual. In any case, ritual usually tends to stutter when confronted with the principled informality of American life, that refusal to walk in step so poignantly demonstrated at John F. Kennedy's funeral.

Most Americans who wanted to show pride in and gratitude to their country fell back on their hometown ways of marking any old Fourth of July: picnics, pageants, parades—with a few extra fireworks thrown in. This private, local and civilian mode of celebration expressed more graphically than any official homily or sombre editorial the kind of society that was thanking its lucky stars.

As a result, for many people the Bicentennial may resound in the memory little more than other Independence Days. It is easier to memorialise one dramatic act of liberation than to switch on the imagination's lights to mark an uninterrupted enjoyment of that liberation over two centuries.

According to Milovan Djilas,

"the American Revolution is the only major revolution that never betrayed the hopes of its children."

But how wholeheartedly can you celebrate the fact of never having been betrayed?

IN FACT, the Americans who had the best bicentennial tunes were undoubtedly those fashionable anti-war, anti-capitalist, puritanical eco-faddists and gadflies who called themselves, with characteristic cheek, the People's Bicentennial Commission (PBC). These Counter-Bicentennialists claimed that in reality the Revolution *had* been betrayed and that

"a new monarchy has grown up in America. Today's royalists, America's giant corporations, make King George look like a petty tyrant. Their massive power pervades every aspect of American life, from the aisles of supermarkets to the halls of Congress."

The vulgarity of much Bicentennial ware—Liberty-Bell-shaped whisky bottles, red-white-and-blue lavatory seats, Revolutionary cherry-pie filling—was, they said, symptomatic of the commercial saturation and degradation of American life. Jeremy Rifkin, demobbed anti-war veteran and now ringmaster of the PBC, cunningly appealed alternately to the public delight in impudence and the public taste for moralising by letting off a series of squibs and japes against the Establishment while simultaneously issuing such solemn challenges as

"Will we be content with fireworks and plastic Liberty Bells? Or will we use the anniversary of the Revolution as a time to rededicate ourselves and our country to the sacred ideals our ancestors fought for 200 years ago?"

It must have been Rifkin's Finest Hour when Senator Eastland was moved to complain:

"The PBC has stolen our bicentennial. It has been far more successful in reaching our churches, our schools and our media than has the official bicentennial organisation. What is more, our heavily documented evidence establishes beyond challenge that they are a far Left organisation whose true views are closer to those of Castro and Mao than they are to the Founding Fathers."

In propaganda terms the PBC succeeded in its perverse object because it had a more titillating thesis. Betrayal is a more *interesting* theme than the continued enjoyment of a heritage. And "betrayal" is the Left premise—as "treason" was once the McCarthyite Right premise—not only of the Counter-Bicentennial but of the Counter-culture as a whole. In the eyes of "revisionist" historians and publicists a fraud has been perpetrated against the American people which has robbed them of their most precious revol.

utionary birthright. Opinions diverge about the timing of this outrage. Some assert that the Revolution was betrayed some time between 1776 and 1789; others that the Constitution itself was a tolerable document but that it was gradually drained of effective meaning by 19th-century robber barons, while others again claim that it is only with the more recent hegemony of the giant corporations that the long erosion of the American ideal has been completed. In the one version, the selfish aristocratic forces triumphed in a short struggle and were able to water down the real democratic promise of the Declaration into the sham democracy of the Constitution. In the other, the forces of monopoly capital gradually mopped up democratic and radical resistance so that the checks and balances in the Constitution have ultimately been reduced to a charade.

Both versions possess an enduring charm for the dissenting American intellectual. They enable him to preserve a pure Americanism while allowing him, even morally compelling him, to oppose every aspect of the American system as it actually exists. He adheres to an almost Platonic version of his constitutional rights—or what would have been his constitutional rights had 1776 not been followed by a “Thermidorean reaction”—to quote a notorious heading in Morison & Commager’s classic *Growth of the American Republic*. If American life feels flat and vulgar, if American politicians and judges turn out to be corrupt or incompetent, if the United States becomes entangled in hopeless or immoral foreign wars, this is not because men are fallible. It is certainly not because democracies are by nature open to degeneration as Montesquieu and Tocqueville warned. It is because the original spirit of Americanism has been deliberately poisoned. This myth of a stolen yet still recoverable birthright gives American dissidence a curious optimistic mien which seems to Europeans peculiarly American. Somewhere in the realm of pure forms there is that original finer, truer America still waiting for us once we escape from the Nixonian cave, the hellhole of *Amerika*.

THE REVISIONIST VERSION has been gaining strength in academe for most of this century. Martin Diamond in his masterly essay, “The Declaration and the Constitution: Liberty, Democracy and the Founders”<sup>1</sup> charts the now familiar path beaten out by J. Allen Smith, Charles A. Beard, and Vernon L. Parrington. This path has

<sup>1</sup> *The Public Interest*, No. 41, Fall 1975.

<sup>2</sup> “The American Revolution: Who Were ‘The People’?” *New York Review of Books*, 5 August 1976.

<sup>3</sup> *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America*. By ERIC FONER. Oxford University Press, £7.75, \$13.95; paper £2.75, \$3.95.

in recent years broadened into a six-lane highway carrying a bizarre variety of traffic. Scholars now scour the last quarter of the 18th century for the slightest trace of aristocratic repression or chicanery, the faintest twitch of popular discontent or proletarian political activity. The discovery of a bread riot in West Virginia can make an academic reputation.

Bicentennial year has produced a fair crop of such researches, many of them vivid and valuable explorations of odd corners of late colonial and post-revolutionary life in America. Yet any attempt to derive a revisionist moral from these researches sooner or later comes up against the one towering objection put, temperately but cogently, by Edmund S. Morgan.<sup>2</sup>

“It will not render oppression any less oppressive if it affects a minority rather than a majority, but if we are talking about ‘political and economic realities within America’, the probability remains that a majority of adult males in the colonies owned the property on which they supported their families and were qualified to participate in the political process, that the national government, in other words, did have a popular base. . . . That majority must surely be counted as part of the people rather than of the élite. A history dealing with ordinary men cannot proceed on the assumption that they are a minority and the élite a majority. This fact has been something of an embarrassment to historians who seek in the Revolution a radical tradition that can be carried forward to a time when the masses were indeed without property.”

The enslaved fifth of the population was no doubt oppressed. So too were many of the tens of thousands of indentured servants. But even in Tom Paine’s Philadelphia it is probable that these two categories together were distinctly in the minority before the Revolution and afterwards both declined sharply. Eric Foner in an excellent book<sup>3</sup> shows that Philadelphia did have a working class with its own characteristic way of life but that this working class was increasingly outnumbered by the artisan class into which so many of its members percolated. A minority is a minority. Furthermore, a poor minority which explicitly and repeatedly asks no more than to be given the chance to join the better-off majority cannot be portrayed as a would-be revolutionary class.

Jeremy Rifkin describes the aim of the PBC as “to take patriotism away from the DAR [the Daughters of the American Revolution] and the American Legion” and give it back to the native revolutionary tradition of Tom Paine. But the inconvenience of this tradition is its thoroughgoing devotion to a concept of liberty which includes without shame and reservation a central place for economic liberty. It is remarkable how historians like Commager manage to discuss the influence of the *philosophes* on the Founders while waltzing neatly round Adam

Smith as though he scarcely existed. The fact that 1776 was also the year of *The Wealth of Nations* has gone singularly uncelebrated by the Counter-Bicentennialists. Chilton Williamson<sup>4</sup> pertinently speculates whether Rifkin knows that Paine said "I have always been a friend to riches."

THE REVISIONIST CASE is not of course totally lost even if it is conceded that the national government did have a popular base. It remains possible that the ruling élite, having deservedly secured that popular allegiance by the Declaration, then betrayed its supporters in framing the Constitution. Diamond convincingly refutes this thesis of an egalitarian, democratic Declaration subverted by a reactionary Constitution constructed to protect the interests of the rich. The two documents in fact flow from the same political philosophy and, if anything, their relationship is the other way round, can easily be seen to be the other way round, and was so seen by earlier generations which were not obsessed by equality as the only political good. After all, it is the *Constitution* which takes the dramatic step of opting for democracy, that form of government regarded hitherto as prohibitively corruptible and fissile. The concern of the Declaration, by contrast, is to state those truths of liberty which really were "self-evident" to that libertarian age. About government, the Declaration says only that governments derive their powers from the consent of the governed who have the right to alter or abolish a destructive government and institute a new one. The Declaration allows, as Montesquieu allows, that the people might choose "any form of government", monarchic or aristocratic if they so wished. As Diamond points out, "it does not prescribe that the people establish a democratic form of government which *operates* by means of their consent." Similarly, the statement that "all men are created equal" meant for Thomas Jefferson as it did for John Locke only that all men were equally entitled to the rights which comprise political liberty.

Now these texts are not so hard to interpret in their correct sense. When in doubt students have only the exhilarating duty of seeking clarification in *The Federalist*. The revisionist argument is as easily exploded on the philosophical as on the historical front.

<sup>4</sup> Chilton Williamson, "They Almost Stole the Bicentennial", *National Review*, 20 August 1976.

<sup>5</sup> For a spirited discussion of these and other contacts and divergences between Britain and America, see Bernard Bailyn, 1776: *The British Dimension*; also J. H. Plumb, *Britain and America: The Cultural Tradition* (both bicentenary papers to a joint meeting of the Royal Society and the British Academy, *Notes and Records of the Royal Society*, January 1977).

The persistent and perhaps even growing popularity of revisionism seems rather to be born of a psychological need to find a socialist element in the American heritage, some vein that can be tapped and exploited to provide a distinctively American ideology of the Left which will not expatriate its adherents. Hidden behind the wainscoting there lies a long-lost testament which will show that the Rifkins and not the usurping Rockefellers are the true heirs to the patrimony. This scouring of sacred texts for usable authority is one more reminder that in America patriotic feeling is defined not by love of landscape or liturgy but by reverence for political documents; nostalgia felt not for birch trees or the Tridentine Mass but for the purity of ancient aspirations.

Unfortunately for the revisionist, American history turns out to be a dangerous weapon, liable to blow up in his face and do considerable damage to interested bystanders, most notably by reason of its unfailing tendency to show that we have been here before and that the carefully plotted transitions—from Jefferson to Jackson, from aristocracy to plutocracy, from settlers to immigrants—important though they are, may mask certain equally important continuing features of American life.

IT IS THESE CONTINUITIES which make Alexis de Tocqueville, James Bryce and Henry James as readable and relevant as ever. Even Foner's picture of the class structure in Philadelphia on the eve of the Revolution is strangely familiar: a small, often licentious and sensation-seeking upper class, a huge, sober and industrious middle class, and a much smaller working class, violent and lawless but upwardly mobile and only partially and intermittently alienated from the system. In fact, "the people in general have a predilection to the great, and are ever fond of bestowing the highest offices upon them" (according to a writer in the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* in 1777).

In reflecting upon these continuities one is driven up against a gap in the vocabulary of politics. Radical revolutionism was certainly an important driving force in the creation of the United States. But was it any more important than the hunger for land, or colonial disgust at the corruption of the English ruling class, or resentment at the high-handed meddling of the British government, or the influence of English parliamentary and legal traditions, or the rapid and chaotic economic growth of the period?<sup>5</sup> To take Tom Paine and Richard Price as the sole ideological founding fathers is a distortion which cannot be wholly honest. The least misleading

characterisation of the American Revolution is that it was "a conservative revolution." But even this is a muddling contradictory sort of phrase which offers an opening for the revisionist claim that it was an aborted revolution. Can a *revolution* be conservative? As a British schoolboy, I was hardly aware of the American Revolution as a concept. I remember only being taught about the War of American Independence followed by the Loss of the American Colonies. There may be something to be said for this insular but ideologically neutral phrasing. What happened was surely not so much a complete transformation or turning upside down of a society as a *breaking out* from an outworn husk or the firing of the second stage of a rocket. We need a metaphor of development, sudden and violent development no doubt, but a metaphor which manages to suggest the continuation and enlargement of a project which was implicit in the first emigrations and settlements 150 years and more before.

THE MOST GLARING AND TOPICAL of these continuities is corruption in public life. Now and then indeed the torrent of venality does seem to have abated. Rascals are thrown out, stern incorruptibles elevated to high office, municipal stables hosed down. New laws purporting to remove temptation from the bribed and opportunity from the briber are passed amid universal acclamation. Things, we happily tell ourselves, will never be quite the same again. And yet. . . .

In retrospect each cataclysmic scandal-to-end-all-scandals—Teapot Dome, Watergate, Lockheed—comes to seem no more than the seventh wave which knocks over—but only temporarily—all those who have been comfortably paddling in the smaller waves that preceded it. "Let's put morals back into American business", chorus the Rifkin crowd. "It would be the best birthday present we could possibly give the nation." To this end they send out thousands of letters to the wives and secretaries of leading businessmen urging them to sneak "on any criminal and abusive policies" in which their men might be dabbling. John Dean has, it seems, replaced Horatio Alger as the *beau idéal* of American youth. There lurks in this Counter-Bicentennial "dirty trick", as in so much American reformism, whether serious or mischievous, the assumption that corruption has only recently poisoned the original purity of American morals. This assumption is repeatedly punctured but tends to bob up again in no time.

Gore Vidal's hard-boiled bicentennial entertainment, *1876*, has been read with due pleasure

by thousands of Americans as a Nixonian parable. In Grant's administration, we are told,

"everyone appears to have his price. . . . The Country's First Magistrate is a criminal. . . . Certainly if true justice was meted out to one and all, most of the congressmen would be in prison while Mrs Astor's parties would be decimated at the very least. . . . Government here is simply the giving and taking of money."

Secret Servicemen are employed to break open a safe. The President feigns ignorance of his subordinates' actions. And so on.

In many ways *1876* is a less ambitious though no less skilled remake of Henry Adams's novel *Democracy*, which also deals with the Washington of the 1870s. Nothing in Vidal quite matches the outburst in *Democracy* by Baron Jacobi, the Bulgarian Minister (who also appears, but less full-bloodedly in *1876*):

"You Americans believe yourselves to be excepted from the operation of general laws. You care not for experience. I have lived seventy-five years, and all that time in the midst of corruption. I am corrupt myself, only I do have courage to proclaim it, and you others have it not. Rome, Paris, Vienna, Petersburg, London, all are corrupt; only Washington is pure! Well, I declare to you that in all my experience I have found no society which has had elements of corruption like the United States. The children in the street are corrupt, and know how to cheat me. The cities are all corrupt, and also the towns and the counties and the States' legislatures and the judges. Everywhere men betray trusts both public and private, steal money, run away with public funds. . . . I do much regret that I have not yet one hundred years to live. If I could then come back to this city I should find myself very content—much more than now. I am always content where there is much corruption, and *ma parole d'honneur!* . . . the United States will then be more corrupt than Rome under Caligula; more corrupt than the Church under Leo X; more corrupt than France under the Regent!"<sup>6</sup>

Gore Vidal carries this theme backwards in time as well as forwards. *1876* is after all the middle part of a political trilogy whose outer legs are *Burr* and *Washington DC*. And the author takes care to remind us here that by the time of the Centennial corruption was no novelty in the United States. His sophisticated Gallatin, the son of Jefferson's Treasury Secretary, says to the shocked, incorruptible Tilden:

"You know, Mr Tilden, I used to talk a great deal to my father about the early days of the republic and . . . well, I do not mean to confound you, sir, but what you describe has always been the rule with us. Certainly in New York we have always given one another bribes and, whenever possible, taken the public's money. . . ."

"But surely, Mr Gallatin, all this changed when the founder of our party, when Mr Jefferson was elected President."

"Nothing ever changes, Mr Tilden. People are people."

1776 equals 1876 equals 1976. This is an un-

<sup>6</sup> Henry Adams, *Democracy* (1880), ch IV.

progressive, unpalatable, un-American equation. To succeed in American public debate you must be moralistic. Arguments devoid of moralism simply make no impact. The Bicentennial campaign for the presidency was moralistic from first to last. Between, within, and even beyond the two great parties, the contest was to establish which candidate was better qualified morally to regenerate the nation. Did Reagan represent a more distilled version of Republican virtue than Ford? Did Udall or Harris more nearly approach the pioneer simplicity of the people? Or did salvation lie in the monkish asceticism of Brown or McCarthy? And in the end of course the most moralistic of all the candidates won.

TO EUROPEAN EARS the whole debate was conducted in a foreign language full of alluring but alien vowels. Only Senator Henry Jackson campaigned in a fashion we would recognise, and he got much less far than his impressive record would lead foreigners to expect. True, he is a boring speaker, but he was not the only boring speaker. In fact Jackson failed just because he lacked either talent or stomach for vacuous and extravagant moral assertion, although his skilled and persistent campaign for Soviet Jewry was one of the most effective assertions of moral principle in recent history. This contrast between the uninhibitedly moralising candidate and his defeated rival who is hampered by a conviction that proportion and restraint are an essential part of moral conduct in politics is an old American theme. Elmer Gantry usually wins. All in all, the whole Bicentennial campaign tended to show how little changes on the American political scene. With the single important exception of Jimmy Carter's Southern origin, the candidates, the rhetoric, and most of the issues in 1976 would have done just as well in 1876.

THIS STABILITY is exhausting to the patience of observers. A system in which after a hundred years the same two parties are still preaching the same virtues, still running against "Washington", still denouncing corruption and bureaucracy, and still nearly deadheading at the end of it all, well, such a system is bound to seem rather stuck in the mud, particularly in a nation which prides itself on its appetite for change. This impatience often gives rise to a tendency to anticipate, exaggerate or even invent dramatic shifts. The death of the Republican Party is frequently forecast; so is the break-up of the Democratic coalition of forces; unprecedented volatility is said to menace the future of party in the US. Many of the contributors to the notable number of *The Public Interest* for Fall

1975 foresee changes which only a year after publication already seem less plausible than they did.

The most interesting contention is that advanced by Daniel Bell in "The End of American Exceptionalism." According to Bell, the conditions which gave Americans such an all-pervading sense of their own uniqueness no longer operate.

"The American Century lasted scarcely thirty years. It foundered on the shoals of Viet Nam. . . . There is no longer a Manifest Destiny or mission. We have not been immune to the corruption of power. We have not been the exception."

The American's land is no longer a providential Eden "that God hath espied out . . . for Him", no longer an unspoiled free place where men might make their own destiny. Modern technology and communications, the global economy and the global battlefield have destroyed God's gift of insulated space. The majority of Americans no longer run their own businesses in small communities, safe from external interference or attack. To survive they have to throw themselves on the rough mercies of the big corporation and the big city. Even their fabulous economic abundance is no longer unchallenged. These social and economic transformations have, Bell says, dangerously weakened the political structure, sapping both the two-party system and public respect for constitutional procedures and the law. As a result, "we are a nation like all other nations."

This thesis in one form or another is widely promulgated among Americans of all political shades, though not often as explicitly as Bell puts it. I have very rarely heard it put forward by Europeans, most of whom continue to regard Americans, with greater or lesser degrees of affection, as an extraordinary people.

Daniel Bell himself would no doubt concede that even on his own argument he is jumping the gun a little. There is still more space in America, both literally and psychologically. Americans can and do up sticks, change home, job, wife, way of life far more readily than Europeans. If inter-continental missiles and OPEC make the Middle West less immune to the outside world, they have not yet destroyed its sturdy provincialism. And the decline of American economic supremacy, so often predicted on all sides, is turning out to be a slow business. Almost all those factors which Bell claims have shaped American exceptionalism look like taking another generation or so to be extinguished.

And even when they are extinguished will Americans really lose their uniqueness? After all, the first and most spectacular social impact of the giant corporations took place seventy years ago.

If the sense of uniqueness could survive that, why should it not continue to survive? Equally, if it survived the trauma of the Civil War, why should it not survive the remoter agonies of Viet Nam? If it is only unbroken success that keeps the sense of uniqueness alive, how is it that the shattered South maintains along with its peculiar resentments an Americanism no less fierce than that of the North? By assuming that social change must have an immediate and dramatic effect upon a society's psychological outlook, the sociologist is in danger of underestimating the durability and resilience of deep-lying historical influences.

AMERICANS CHOSE their country. They chose their Constitution. I put these sentiments plainly because that is how they are felt. They are often felt no less strongly by third- or fourth-generation Americans who did not do the choosing themselves than by immigrants who did; and they are adopted even by Americans whose ancestors were brought there in chains. This sense of choice was certainly swelled, made awesome by the grandeur, openness and abundance of the land, by the victory in the Independence wars and by the libertarian wisdom of the Founding Fathers. But it antedates those glorious circumstances and continues to throb unmistakably through American history. This confidence in the possession of liberty is not to be undermined by failure in foreign wars, however agonising, or by the filling up of the wide open spaces.

To assert that this feeling of liberty is and always has been the overwhelming fact about American life is not inconsistent with pointing out the native American varieties of conformism, hypocrisy, and corruption. The fact that these failings have been remarked on from the start suggests rather that they may derive from that liberty, as Tocqueville argued. What the sense of freedom undeniably does produce is a sort of existential anxiety noted by all foreign travellers. Americans looking at their own country often adopt a kind of professional melancholy like that of builders who take gloomy satisfaction in detecting the beginnings of dry rot or the death-watch beetle. Martin Diamond detects "a sense of faltering and uncertainty as we confront our Bicentennial." Samuel P. Huntington diagnoses a bad case of "the democratic distemper", and he quotes John Adams:

"Democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide."

This volatility is nothing new. Americans are notoriously manic-depressive about the prospects for their country. Many Americans confronted the Centennial with a similar sense of faltering and

uncertainty. But only a few years later the centennials of the framing and ratification of the Constitution were celebrated with unqualified joy. Then a couple of decades on again, back to doubt and despair. Diamond quotes Henry Cabot Lodge Sr.'s reflections in 1911 on the "discordant outcry" of demagogues and agitators who "now lift their hands to tear down or remake the Constitution", thus causing the vast mass of the American people who still believe in their Constitution to "look and listen, bewildered and confused", as the air is "rent with harsh voices of criticism and attack." For every Brooks Adams or Henry Luce basking in visions of empire there is always a Henry Adams or Gore Vidal waiting round the corner with a bucketful of cold water. After only four years of his *American Century*, Luce himself (as Bell, once an editor of Luce's *Fortune*, reminds us) called the whole thing off. American intellectuals have a fondness for re-making their image of the country in their image of themselves—and vice versa. It is hard for carapaced, fossilised Europeans to keep up with this high turnover in selves and countries. *Time* Magazine reports (22 November 1976) that Charles A. Reich, the Yale Condorcet who in *The Greening of America* charted with enviable certainty and profit the successive states of American consciousness, has now entered his own personal Consciousness III:

"First there was Charles Reich outstanding law student, clerk of Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black and button-down member of an aggressive Washington law firm. Then came Charles Reich Two: the Yale professor who put his pulse on the thumb of the nation when he ratified and amplified the '60s counter-culture in *The Greening of America*, the most profoundly naive best-seller of the period. *The Sorcerer of Bolinas Reef* introduces the third Reich, a San Francisco homosexual who now quotes Joni Mitchell and Walt Whitman and preaches an herbal-essence philosophy called 'evolutionary rebellion'. . . ."

Eldridge Cleaver's attitude towards his country has taken a different route: Loathe it, Leave it, Love it. Implicit in all such changes of "life style", all "being into" a succession of contrasting modes of experience, is an assumed link between the destiny of self and nation, a shared project. There's a long, long ego trip a-winding into the land of my dreams.

THE MORE AGONISED, questioning, faltering note struck by American commentators on the Bicentennial derives not from the objective plight of the Union but from a certain shared feeling of *responsibility* for it. Looking in from outside, most sympathetic European observers spoke in the cheerful tones of the London *Sunday Times* (4 July 1976):

"The political, economic and philosophical consequences of the United States are profound and beneficial and an inspiration for a Western civilisation sustained by faith in the individual and his capacity for virtue. Nowhere else, despite obvious flaws, has an individual such a chance to develop his talents, moral, physical and intellectual."

Against all its stark problems of violence, race and poverty,

"must be set the testified capacity of the society for candour, for self-criticism, for idealism, and for climbing the unscaleable peaks. A still-young nation has grown into a super-power while retaining and renewing the dreams of its founders."

By contrast, the *Washington Post* on the same day sounded a more uncertain trumpet, accepting that

"America at the Bicentennial is once again a nation in transition, sobered by new awareness of the limits of abundance, concerned about its future role in the world, uncertain of its social health and political vitality."

To the *New York Times* too, the challenge raised by social and economic problems seemed to overshadow the magnificence of the achievements:

"The words of the Declaration, ever renewed, take on pointed significance when we apply them to the realities of the present age, to the gaping holes and strident deficiencies of our society, to the injustices and inequities that still exist and in some cases are even intensifying, to the erosion and corrosion of public and private standards of morality."

Of course the Jeremiahs of the *Times* and the *Post*, or of Harvard and Columbia, do not represent all of America; but their agonised concern seems no less peculiarly American than the passionate optimism of middle America.

This intensity of commitment is not a morbid defect but rather an inherent element in the project of being American. Seymour Martin Lipset notes in articles on Watergate by Europeans, Israelis, Japanese and others,

"bewilderment at what looks to them to be an 'over-reaction' of Americans to types of government behaviour which foreigners take for granted as inherent in the relation of politics to society. Here is another illustration of the differences in outlook between societies which assume some natural wickedness in men, and one whose ethos is premised on a utopian, religious belief in human perfectibility. Americans retain both the capacity to be shocked by evil and the motivation to resist it."

This is only half-right. Europeans do not all take corruption for granted as inherent in the relation of politics to society. Most North European democracies are, and have been for many decades, much less corrupt than the United States and are confident of their duty and ability to root out what corruption does exist. What Europeans are bewildered by is the American's affectation of pained surprise on receiving a specific proof of the corruption which he knows to be endemic to his political system. This amiable hypocrisy surely derives from a more intense commitment to that system. Watching the performance of *their* Republic, most Americans experience the anxiety of the impresario with a lifetime's savings invested in the production, not the brutal, judicial detachment of the audience who have staked only an evening's entertainment.

AS ALL OBSERVERS from Bryce to Stephen Leacock have noted, Americans remain unfailingly eager to know what the visitor thinks of their country. Leacock also remarked in *My Discovery of England* (1922) on the "irregular and one-sided balance of trade" in impressions: "British lecturers have been known to land in New York, pass the customs, drive uptown in a closed taxi, and then forward to England *from the closed taxi itself* ten dollars' worth of impressions of American national character . . ." (a feat easily surpassed by the present essay which has even dispensed with the formalities of travel). Bryce claims that both natives and visitors are so interested in American institutions because they represent a new experiment in democracy which we may all wish or be fated to copy. Yes, but for Americans there is more to it than that. There is a sense of personal abandonment to the project, a feeling both that they are making America and that America is making them, a commitment to their time and place which at its extreme crystallises into the "other-directed" personality.

In their sense of the ungiven, provisional nature of life, Americans often seem to be the only real existentialists. They are uniquely self-makers. From this project of being American derive all the often remarked characteristics of restlessness, enthusiasm, openness, changeability, generosity, transparency. This project comes from a long way back and is not to be easily dislodged even by the sharpest jolts of modernity. It is a long engagement.

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## FILM

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### *Letter from Rome*

# The Thrill of Chastity

By Luigi Barzini



FABRIZIO, THE movie director, had collected us all at his place, the way he always does (Venanzio told me, some evenings ago) to think up his next film. You know how it goes: eating, drinking, thumbing through newspapers and magazines, talking nonsense, yawning, making passes at any available starlets, dozing. Some directors now turn to inventing autobiographical memories of their early days, hoping for some Fellini-style ideas, which is rather like leafing through the Bible in the hope of turning out another Sistine Chapel. Some people ring up London, Los Angeles or Zagarolo; some play cards; some quarrel in low voices.

Then, just occasionally, an idea is born, or the idea of an idea. It may only be a title—"Mum in the Brothel", "Better Luck Next Time", "The Kindly Torturer", "The Depraved Pope", "The Italian Sewer", and so on. Or it may be a single scene—something filthy, almost disgusting—which gets everyone busy inventing what is supposed to be happening before and after. People leap on such ideas like dogs on a bone. They paw at it from every angle, turn it over to see what's underneath it, try to pick it up—but in the end practically always, for some reason or other, reject it.

That evening at Fabrizio's we were looking somewhat desperately for unfamiliar sexual deviations. We had the authoritative books with us. The most useful of them (dug up heaven-knows-where by Fabrizio) was a complete catalogue of the most unimaginable sins and vices. Some of them were extremely weird, and all were classified like plants by their Latin names. Our best text appeared to be an old manual used in the seminaries in Tridentine days, and compiled to

stop confessors being surprised at anything their penitents might blurt out. But it was pretty hard going. Who on earth remembers so much Latin?

If we'd only found something truly new, the rest would have followed quite easily. The political slant never changes, of course, and there was no need to worry about that. One side is always good, the other bad. All vice can be blamed on the Consumer Society, the Industrial Society, the Evil Rich, the *Padroni*, the USA, neo-colonialism, neo-imperialism, the priests, and the *democristiani*.

Yes I know, it's an obvious, childish, outworn position, as dreary as the one you used to get in the cinema when it was "all the fault of" the plutocratic capitalists and then later when it was "all the fault of" the plutocratic Jews.

ALL THE SAME you must see that it would be asking for trouble, in fact a total disaster, to look at things in a less obvious sort of way, just to make a change. For one thing, you get political help and support from only one side—and that's the side that frightens the authorities, gets you the money, and later on saves you from having your film withdrawn on charges of pornography. Our magistrates are easily bullied.

AROUND TWO O'CLOCK, Antonio at last had what seemed to be a new idea. In the personal column of an avant-garde American magazine, where lonely-hearts go looking for ideal companionship among their own or the opposite sex, he had dug out an odd item.

"Attractive transvestite [it said], tall, slim, 48, seeks relationship with imaginative, attractive, liberated girl who will help him to develop his feminine personality."

Even our "Confessors' Manual" had never thought of a lesbian transvestite. Those of us who were still awake at that hour of the morning discussed the possibilities of the situation quite excitedly. We saw the main character in fascist uniform, though often naked as well. In one scene he is nailed to a cross (a touch of sacrilege, never a bad thing). We saw his parents as owners of some multi-national enterprise or as the scourge of starving peasants, and the girl who answered the advertisement as being unaware (temporarily, at least) that she was his natural sister (a touch of incest, never a bad thing either).

But in the end we were not quite convinced it would work. However hard we tried we couldn't make anything of it but a somewhat pointless, rather incomprehensible mess. Films like that, as you know, don't need intelligence or inspiration. All they need, to be praised and to make money, is a basic quota of erotic scenes, dialogue studded

with bad language, the usual obviously unequivocal political position, and a bit of stylish photography. But unfortunately they also need a story that hangs together. And that we just couldn't manage.

IT WAS DAWN. I tried to save the situation by turning to mythology. Useful, having been a classicist. I quoted C. G. Jung on the perpetuity of Myths, and the way everything could be translated into modern terms and put into contemporary life (which meant that, among other things, it could be given a political stance). In particular I suggested using the love affairs with animals that had sometimes produced legendary monsters.

The Story of the Swan we rejected straight away. There aren't any trained swans on the market, and making them out of plastic with electric motors is pretty well hopeless. . . . But we went on to consider the story of Pasiphae, wife of King Minos, who had herself enclosed in a fake cow, made by Daedalus with perfect combination between the two bodies, and was impregnated by a white bull (who was clearly stupid, short-sighted, and in a disgraceful hurry).

Out of this came the famous Minotaur who every nine years demanded the sacrifice of fourteen Athenian adolescents of both sexes. (He was inclined to fast; but was a meat-eater, like Pennella; and so he ate them.) Fabrizio was interested in the idea, and considered its possibilities. Pasiphae, wife of a Fascist millionaire or German *Junker*, a crazy product of late-capitalist society, shut inside a fake cow; Daedalus, the intellectual technocrat, enslaved to the Multinationals. Fourteen youngsters, all village proletarians, naked . . . *etc.*, *etc.*

We made nothing of it, though. And as we went home we wondered gloomily whether, perhaps, a whole phase in history was over? Or, rather, if dirty films would continue to be made, it would be with less and less success. Had filth now saturated the market? Had we come to the end in erotic variations? After all, the number of sexes and of orifices in the human body (and of their possible permutations and combinations) is

statistically limited. Besides which, more and more people were bored with the progressive attitudes taken, as if they needed to be "liberated" yet again.

NEXT DAY, WHILE I was shaving, I wondered if the time hadn't come to try out a *clean* film. I mean, one with fully dressed women whose appeal lay entirely in their eyes and subtle movements, in the expression of their faces (not any other part of their anatomy), and in the feelings that torment and delight many of us rather more than purple drugs or collective sexual acrobatics.

The idea seemed to me quite interesting but rather risky; it appeared almost impossible to put into effect. First of all, we had to invent clean up-to-date stories and not turn back to the hackneyed old tales of our great-grandparents. Then we had to locate actors and actresses who could give you goose-pimples with a single word or even with a moment of silence, and find contemporary directors of old-fashioned talent and sensitivity. And who would finance us? Who would protect us? What chance did we really have going against the stream like that?

WELL, YOU PROBABLY KNOW how I've solved the problem. I've gone abroad, secretly. All the names of my collaborators are pseudonyms. My clean films are smuggled into Italy, usually under the floor of rigged-up cars. They're shown in small, private, side-street cinemas. The prices are admittedly excessive, and you have to know a special password. More than that, the places where they're exhibited change continuously, like floating crap-games.

If I may say so, I've been rather successful. Maybe because of the conspiratorial secret atmosphere and the danger, for the audience, of arrest or worse. Certainly I've no complaints. My only real worry is a change in the current political situation. So long as sin, ruin, vice and corruption are on top, I feel quite safe in the clean underground. You can now well imagine what would happen to me if—just suppose—virtue were to triumph. I'd be out on my ear. Luckily though, it's a purely hypothetical danger.

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## CONFERENCE

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### *Conversation in Berlin*

# The English Disease

*By Stuart Maclure*



ONE OF THE SYMPTOMS of "the English disease" is, an obsessive hypochondria. Like everyone who enjoys ill health, we are convinced of the absorbing interest of our own condition. When foreigners humour us by asking how we feel, we tell them; if they are polite enough to give us more encouragement, we tell them at length. Without the least embarrassment we expose our scars and deformities like experienced patients in a teaching hospital.

Or, at any rate, so it seemed one dark and gloomy weekend in November when the Berlin off-shoot of the Aspen Institute of Humanistic Studies brought together 10 Britons, 10 Germans, 6 Americans and a couple of French people, to spend two-and-a-half days dissecting "The Future of Great Britain." There was, thank heavens, no question of representative delegations, or official spokespersons; the participants were mainly drawn from politics, banking, journalism, academic life, the foreign service. Among the British group there was a Labour MP and a Conservative MP, a Labour Peer, a senior government economist. There was unfortunately no professional trade union leader, no real-live industrialist. There was also a deceptive absence of serious radicalism; manful attempts by the politicians to keep their ends up by disarming bipartisanship or witty provocation were no real substitute. On the other hand, the British did at least share a burning curiosity to know what the future holds for them, and a readiness to try on for size a range of scenarios, most of them nasty, but some undoubtedly nastier than others.

The German participants included the German ambassador to Britain (who acted, for much of the time, as the most persuasive advocate for Britain); a genuine gnome, in the shape of a senior official of the West German Finance Ministry; several newspapermen; a trade union economist; and several academics.

The American group mixed diplomats, bankers, journalists and academics, to produce the salt which seasoned both the self-criticism of the British and the cagey politeness of the Germans. Presiding over the whole exercise was Dr Ralf Dahrendorf, the alarmingly accomplished director of the London School of Economics, than whom nobody seemed better fitted to interpret the British to the Germans, or the Germans to the British.

THERE IS AN OBVIOUS IRONY about pondering the future of Great Britain in the luxurious home of Aspen, Berlin, on an island in the Wannsee, once part of Goebbels' estate, in a divided city where every permanence has a contingent quality.

What, then, about the future of Berlin? In fact, of course, the format of the meeting tends to build up the notion of the social and economic stability of Germany and America by contrasting it with the decadent condition of Britain. Admittedly, with singular magnanimity, one of the French participants notes that any society, any economy put under the microscope as the British is to be, would show plenty of flaws. Admittedly also, there are magnanimous attempts from time to time to develop the thesis that Britain's troubles today are Europe's and North America's tomorrow. But these are not really convincing. The Germans and Americans don't really believe in this thesis, though a nod towards it is a form of insurance against over-confidence. What stands out is the solid confidence which the German and American participants seemed to have in the competitive economic systems which have made them rich and strong.

The British, on the other hand, cannot in all conscience claim that their inefficient mixed economy has made them rich and strong. Nor have they much confidence in it. But as the conversation goes on, they show few signs of wanting to embrace either aggressive individualism or red-blooded socialism. Behind the catalogue of failure in economic management which the British (and the rest) acknowledge, there remains a stubborn, complacent, and (in the new jargon) unacceptable suspicion that, somehow, many of the things which make Britain a pleasant place to live in help to limit its effectiveness as an economic enterprise and, therefore, threaten many of its social objectives.

A LOT OF TIME IS SPENT discussing the British economy, its short-term crisis and long-term malaise. There is intense topical interest in the question of international and bilateral financial support—the question of a £2.35 billion IMF loan is in the forefront of the news at the time. With a suave smile, but barely concealed impatience, the gnome spells out why Western Germany is prepared to assist the British economy only on a multilateral basis. The legacy of the earlier loan to Italy had been bitter. The Germans are self-conscious about their wealth and muscle, reluctant to incur the envious hostility which goes with leadership. Besides, the law carefully prescribes the limits of the government's powers to make overseas loans. Britain is not lacking for short-term help, but long-term support, and this has to be through international institutions. . . .

And so on. The response of the British is revealing. The politicians take it all very much to heart. Even while asserting that self-help is the only kind of help which can do something about the underlying weaknesses of contemporary Britain, they are conditioned to the necessity of the next loan. They urge the Germans to "exercise leadership." Are they saying, tacitly if not out loud, that the best leadership foreigners could give to Britain would be to force her to stand on her own two feet?

There is a steady undercurrent of criticism of the Trade Unions and of Management. Much of it is of the painless and insincere kind which excuses the excesses of Union power as, in themselves, manifestations of Managerial failure. The German trade unionist's contributions underline the differences between the British and German industrial scene. He describes the preparations for the next round of wage claims, and the preliminary discussions at the national level to establish, if possible, a consensus on the economic outlook for the coming year. This will produce an estimate figure for the growth rate. The banking authorities will determine the permissible increase in the money supply, and the negotiations will take place in the knowledge that wage settlements will have to take account of these limits or result in a rise in unemployment. The rationality of it all is staggering to the British; so too is the small part played in the process by plant bargaining or shop stewards.

What is clear, however, is that the "Social Contract" (at least in the 1975 form) is of considerable interest to the Germans. Is this an example of Britain anticipating a development which will have to take place in Europe later? Does it work? will it last? could it survive a change of government? The Tory MP is a study in moderation. He cannot summon up the

superlatives for the Social Contract which his Labour colleague uses, but he makes clear how heavily the Tories have to rely on something like it continuing *ad hoc* if not *de jure*.

I CAN SEE THAT THE EXERCISE of writing about it in retrospect forces the impression of consensus where none exists. Not without a certain delight in his own mischief-making, one of the British participants, the Labour peer, floats three speculative politico-economic scenarios, all seen from the point of view of the present Labour government.

1. The first envisages the continuation of the Callaghan-Healey economic policy with a steady tightening of the money supply and reductions in public expenditure, leading to an improved balance of payments and yet more unemployment. This, in turn, leads to the break-up of the Labour government, a split in the Labour party, and defeat at the ensuing election, followed by a prolonged period of Conservative government.

2. The second assumes the substitution of the left-wing policies of the National Executive of the Labour Party for those of the right-wing now dominating the Cabinet. Import controls; more nationalisation; high public spending; more public intervention and control; rationing; a siege economy; lower unemployment . . . also lead to a split in the Labour party and defeat at the polls, followed by a prolonged period of Conservative government.

On this hypothesis, the Labour and Trade Union movements, having tried and failed with an attempted socialist alternative—having made their *putsch* and failed—swing back into a kind of permanent opposition, more like that of the Socialist and Communist Left in France than in England.

3. The third—and in this context, preferred—scenario, depends on the hypothesis that Britain's crisis is one shared by a group of nations all more or less economically sick. Ireland, Denmark, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and to a lesser degree, France, are placed in the same boat as Britain, and the suggestion is that by pooling their weaknesses they might make out a stronger case for collective support by the nations whose economies are in surplus. If this were so, it is argued, the structural economic difficulties could be tackled with time borrowed jointly, and the waste and disruption caused by severe deflation of economies already operating well below capacity, could be avoided.

It is not clear how seriously we are expected to take any of these scenarios. It could well be that the great attraction of assembling a job-lot of incipient bankrupts to join Britain in Carey

Street is more to isolate the rich countries in the immediate discussion than to find strength in united weakness. It isn't at all clear where the strength would come from—"seven drunken sailors propping each other up at the bar" is the comment of one hard-nosed investment banker from Wall Street.

THE GERMANS AND AMERICANS are mildly amused by the parochial British political debate—just as they obviously have difficulty in understanding the Labour Party's self-destructive urges, while noting the damage they do to British commerce.

The American investment banker opens up, with a certain aggressive relish, on anecdotes about multi-million-dollar corporations seeking ways of getting their money out of Britain because they despair of the future held out by socialist rhetoric. Someone points out that there aren't many places which would seem safe if you take socialist rhetoric at its face value. But he has made his point, especially as he goes on to claim that British-based multinationals make the same assessment of the situation in their forward investment planning.

Just when it seems to be all gloom-and-doom on the economic front—lightened only by polite encouragement from some of the Germans, and the occasional statistic from the British side disproving the notion that British industry is perpetually strike-bound—everybody suddenly begins to be highly optimistic about North Sea oil.

This comes as something of a surprise. There have been some disparaging remarks early on about the value of the oil discovery from some Continental participants—a German journalist likens it to the irrelevant and even damaging distraction of gold from the New World in 16th-century Spain. In the event, it is the Wall Street banker who speaks most strongly about the potential value of the oil, not merely as an aid to the balance of payments and a source of tax revenue, but also as an asset against which large sums could be raised to finance the re-equipment of British industry, provided it doesn't all get mortgaged to pay for present overspending. In particular, he draws attention to the value of a large supply of crude oil under the control of the British government as an asset in negotiating with other countries in the EEC—notably Germany—and with international oil companies with refining capacity to keep employed.

THE MORE THE DISCUSSION of the economy continues, the more it merges with the debate about institutions and social values. This is what really interests the American and German

participants. An American diplomat says (inevitably) that "the Mother of Parliaments" has been a dominant influence in the development of democratic institutions in the Western world; that the British example of government by consent, the rule of law, political moderation, social stability are what excite world-wide admiration, and asks how they are standing up to the strain. A German voice reinforces this—these institutions represented some of the strength the Germans and their partners in the Six believed Britain would bring to the Nine.

In fact, of course, national stereotypes are always out of date. Far from bringing all sorts of traditional political gifts to the Community, the British had a growing awareness of the failure of these political gifts and it was this which helped to drive them into joining. While the Europeans hoped for an injection of British political *savoir faire*, the British had clearly begun to doubt their own political institutions by comparison with those in Europe.

One by one the Germans and the Americans demonstrate their Anglophilia with nostalgic admiration for the British administrative élite, for the top British academic institutions and the structure of selective high-quality schools which supports them, for the insulation of sensitive institutions from day-to-day politics through bodies like the University Grants Committee and the BBC.

Here the discussion begins to go deeper, and the value of the international mix is vindicated. It is obvious that what the Germans and the Americans admire (from a distance) are aspects of Britain which are breaking down; and more than this, aspects of Britain which many domestic critics blame for the larger breakdowns. In many cases, they are associated with a set of traditional social relationships—once marked by a shared understanding among the élite (who attend the same schools and universities, belong to the same clubs, go to the same tailors), and accepted with deference by the rest of society. Now deference is out. The old élite in the Civil Service, the older universities, the City, politics, is being challenged. The implicit assumptions about what is and what isn't done no longer hold. They are being replaced by explicit rules and tribunals and appeal mechanisms, as government moves in with laws and lawyers to regulate areas of life formerly governed by custom and conviction—in fact by the class system.

This comes out in the Berlin discussion as one British institution after another comes under review. The electoral system is obviously in urgent need of reform, but unfortunately this is not obvious to the two main parties, who still hope for political advantage from its palpable

unfairness. The politicians have little difficulty in showing that Parliament is not working efficiently. The parties are undemocratic, and fail to recruit into active membership more than a tiny percentage of the electorate. Yet even when elected by a minority of the voters, they make unbounded and unwarranted claims for the doctrine of the mandate. The dangers of elective dictatorship are greater than ever—hence renewed but academic interest in a written Constitution, a Bill of Rights, a reformed House of Lords. And over and above all this, there is the far from academic argument about Devolution, and whether frustration at the continued failure of the British economy and the changed world role of Britain is to end in the break-up of the United Kingdom.

So the conversation leads on through familiar avenues—the shift in the power structure caused by the abortive Industrial Relations Act and the Miners' Strike of 1974; the imperfections of trade union electoral systems; and the tendency for trade unions to produce unrepresentative leadership from tiny ideological minorities.

ALL THIS, TOO, was heard with polite forbearance by the Germans and the Americans. Some of them may even have had a sneaking suspicion that the English hypochondria was yet another subtle diplomatic manoeuvre—a form of new-style understatement, disguising an underlying confidence in “muddling through.” The British went away thinking how nice it would be if this were really so.

## A Clearing in the Alps

Above the snow line,  
above the conversation of the valley  
we live precariously, as hermits,  
seldom speaking each other's names.  
We are surrounded by a litter  
of building materials—  
deadwood for the beams,  
slabs of grey stone for a roof.  
We light a fire to make us feel indoors.

The snow-fall section holds back  
by the mountain roadside  
showing by moraine  
its calendar of winter weather.  
I know our footprints are in that wall,  
a glove, a boot,  
evidence of the marmot and the chamois.  
All the angles we construct are made smooth;  
the way home is covered.

It makes us try the harder.  
Melting snow-drifts from the roof,  
shovelling a dry path from the door  
makes the comfort deeper.  
We've won another winter—  
after the thaw we find we're still in love.  
We've made a clearing in the forest,  
fought for ground between the rocks  
to make our life distinct.

*William Peskett*

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## NOTES & TOPICS

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# European Notebook

By François Bondy

### Budapest's "October"

Vienna

ON THAT melodramatic first Saturday in November twenty years ago we drove back hectically from Budapest in the Buick that had been, more hopefully, hired in Vienna. Other journalists remained trapped in the Hungarian capital as the Red Army attacked.

There had been no room for us in the Hotel Duna (formerly the Bristol) where most of the foreign correspondents gathered. Instead we had put up at the Astoria which had been half destroyed in the first round of fighting (in October) that had led to the temporary Soviet withdrawal. An icy wind blew through the lobby and halls, and the usually so elegant hotel-manager shivered in a sheep-skin coat. A small altar (with a red cloth and four candles) commemorated the reception-clerk who had been killed. In the town centre the telephone wires were down and the rusting wrecks of tanks had bitter slogans written on them in red letters: "*This is Soviet Culture.*" The Russians had carried away their own casualties, but dead bodies of AVO secret policemen were still hanging and rotting. Baricades had been built of overturned tramcars. At night there was no lighting in the streets, and nothing was open—unless open means accessible through smashed windows. (Yet nothing was stolen: there was no looting.)

A week later in Vienna I listened to the broadcast of the meeting of the United Nations at which the present French Foreign Minister, M. de Guiringaud, sharply condemned Soviet aggression. The Bulgarian representative declared, with some pathos, that it was the duty of the USSR to protect Hungary from the reactionary vandals who had actually destroyed the Red Army memorial. He prudently refrained from mentioning the gigantic statue of Stalin that had been toppled.

After that hectic dash to the West on the 3rd of November, our papers were cursorily checked by a Soviet patrol between Győr and the Austrian frontier, but cars behind us were not allowed through. Tibor Déry, still the "grand old man of Hungarian letters" in Budapest, was then about

to be condemned to a two-year prison sentence; and in Vienna I gave, as promised, his greetings to his friend Ernst Fischer who broke with the Communist Party—or, more correctly, it broke with him—only much later. (But he did at the time mumble something about already regretting the play in which he allowed Marshal Tito to strut on the stage as "a Fascist.")

I HAD SPENT MANY HOURS at the Hungarian Writers' headquarters, which happened to be next door to the Soviet Embassy. Indeed it acted as a kind of brains-trust for Prime Minister Imre Nagy. (Khrushchev later said: "If we had shot a dozen of them in advance, there would have been no counter-revolution. . . .") I remember that on 1 November there was a long, detailed and intense discussion about the form that some future literary journal was to take. Soviet troops were already surrounding the city; but I can remember no sense of premonition, only cheerfulness and optimistic plans for the morrow. Both Georg Lukács, the Minister of Culture, and the president of the Club, the peasant writer Peter Veres, were full of new projects, all to be informed by a free and new post-Stalinist spirit.

"We don't want to politicise ourselves completely", he surprised me by saying. "An author's right to silence on political questions is new and unprecedented, and must be defended! . . ." A peasant from the Győr district (with dung-stained boots and a big file under his arm) interrupted: "I spent many, many hours at night working on this manuscript! It must be printed at once!" Veres explained that in the circumstances he must be patient. . . . But he only went and stood in a corner, sulking and muttering indignantly.

The dramatist Julius Hay—who spent a long time in prison and shared a cell with Tibor Déry, but was later allowed to emigrate (and died last year at Brissago on Lake Maggiore)—told me why he, an old Communist, had dared to raise his voice in criticism under the terrible Rakosi régime. It was not bravery at all. On the contrary, he said. "The young were indignant—they put irresistible pressure on us of the older generation—and we just had to raise our voices. . . ." It was ironic humour, and it impressed me more than any of the standard bits of revolutionary rhetoric.

The term "People's Democracy" is of course a pleonasm, since *demos* means people. But it struck me in retrospect that if it means that "the masses" proclaim their will, express themselves, and act, we who were there experienced something at that time that otherwise is merely an empty phrase—ten days of people's democracy, in Hungary, twenty years ago.

## The Two Cultures

Zurich



IT IS ALMOST two decades now since C. P. Snow launched, in *ENCOUNTER*, the debate about the two cultures with his pitying critique of literary men (and associated humanists)

for being so ignorant of and indifferent to the methods and conclusions of the natural sciences. The ping-pong game of self-defence and counter-attack has gone on, but some recent articles which I have been reading seem to me to offer a number of interesting new twists and turns.

One needs, as with one of his page-long sentences, a little time to catch up with the views of Isaiah Berlin, and in an essay which I just came across in a quarterly called *Salmagundi* (published by Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, N.Y.) Sir Isaiah deals with the "great divide" between the social and the exact sciences. Why should these two great areas of human concern be called "cultures" simply because they deal with different questions by different methods? How sound is the Western tradition from Descartes to H. G. Wells (and B. F. Skinner) which has contended that anything outside the efforts of exact calculating thought was really only "words" and "illusions"? On the other hand we have the example of that old Neapolitan Giambattista Vico for whom the fables, the myths, and the metaphors were of the profoundest significance. Heidegger, not unlike Vico, also devised the strangest kind of etymology which found truths in the most unlikely verbal associations. The sounds of human voices in history needed to be listened to, pondered and studied, if more with the insights of an "experienced understanding" than with the techniques of sociological and psychological field-workers. Has, then, the Two-Cultures debate been raging for centuries?

For Jean Fourastié it is the French intelligentsia who exhibit the most unfortunate shortcomings. In his critique (in Roger Callois' review *Diogenes*, No. 75, 1976) his colleagues never quite saw either "truth" or "reality" whole, confused as they became in the mix of inherited rationalism, modish existentialism, and the habits of precise formulations leading to calculable solutions. But is science, in its experimentalism, truly "rational" in this sense? Doesn't it more often than not lead only to insights into insoluble problems? "The more we are taught about Man the less we

seem to recognise him." Is, then, the way forward to more doubt and less certainty, more modesty and less self-confident pragmatism? One finds it curious that where for Sir Isaiah "rationality" is the essence of the natural sciences, for M. Fourastié it represents its greatest danger.

THE BATTLE-GROUND BETWEEN "Sceptics and Believers" is worked over by William Nichols in an article in *The American Scholar* (Summer 1976) which deals with the intellectual infatuation with, indeed the "religion" of, Progress. Here too the echoes of the argument are old. Carlyle's essay on the Spirit of the Times (he was writing in 1829) warned against the Model of the Machine and its awful abstract implications for our ways of thinking. One of his critics a few years later put it to him (in an American declaration of faith): "We remain firm in our faith in the steadily increasing improvement of Mankind, and no small part of this faith is the result of mechanical inventions. . . ." From Carlyle to Snow's furious critic, F. R. Leavis, there has been a century of anger against the possibilities of spiritual stagnation and even intellectual degradation in both art and philosophy as a result of such naive Scientific Religion. But is there not a problem here in the very nature of that "humanistic" outrage? Lionel Trilling once asked whether it was not in point of fact the combination of ignorance and uncertainty of the non-scientific intellectual, faced with exact and exacting mathematical methodologies, which led his unconscious into open cries of indignation. Shouldn't we, then, be sceptical of the Sceptics?

In the latest issue of the German *Historische Zeitschrift* (Munich), Richard Konetzke throws a sceptical glance at the historical development of certain scientific ideas in biology and the theory of Evolution. Evidently once-clear notions like "selection" have been over-cast with shadows, and biologists have begun to study the literature of their own past for the "insights of experience." Not unlike poets and biographers they are turning to the problems of very human turning-points and even to the traps of style and language. Didn't Charles Darwin confess in his autobiography that because of his strenuous scientific efforts he was no longer capable of reading Shakespeare with the pleasure that he did in his youth? This he felt to be a spiritual deprivation.

Perhaps it will be, not the sense of Snow-like guilt about intellectual indifference to the vast riches of scientific progress, but a shared sense of mutual impoverishment, that will lead to some reconciliation in the conflict of the Two Cultures.

## Sarraute &amp; the Master

Paris



IT HAPPENED TO BE Nathalie Sarraute's seventy-fourth birthday, but she dislikes to be reminded of the occasion. After all she is still writing with all her wonted freshness, enthusiasm, and *élan*, and has even begun a new career as a dramatic writer for the stage. There is no "serenity of old age" here, as she moves yet again to the attack on the

conformities of the life around her. Gallimard has just published her latest novel, entitled "... *disent les imbéciles*" ... *Fools Say*.

The theme is her familiar one of authority, domination, dissent. In *The Golden Fruits* (1963) it was the problem of opinion-forming literary coteries which can decide the success or failure of a novel, and her protest against their manipulation. This did not hinder one Paris critic from easily dismissing Mme Sarraute's new work as just so much "knitting", with little strands of faded gossip holding together a "typically female" design.

But her world is far from being "little", although she examines it with minute attention as if under a microscope. It produces authentic horrors, and the storms she records are genuine storms and the damage is not easily set right. "Micro-biology" is of first importance in the laboratory, and Nathalie Sarraute has for decades now been doing "micro-literature."

Her current theme, treated with considerable wit and sarcasm, is the rise and fall of the prestigious Personality. Language itself, is, of course, one of the keys to the whole vanity fair: phrases which destroy and new words which try to heal. As I read it I could not help wonder what the hapless European translators will make of the complex and subtle play with French clichés. Even the language of the great nameless Master in the background has to be deciphered—especially that little phrase in one of his polemical writings which gives the novel its title: that's only the way idiots talk. The Master was irritated by some disagreeable viewpoint, and instead of analysis and criticism he simply vulgarises the

argument and dismisses contemptuously its protagonists. This kind of dialectic implicitly assumes: I am very wise, as is well-known, and when I say that these are chattering morons, then that's the end of the matter (for that finishes them off and intimidates at the least any one else from being tempted by such nonsense). . . .

But here, in a very Sarraute-like challenge, just that technique is rigorously questioned, and with it the whole system of vanities in the cultural world, the terrorism of fame and prestige, the empty-minded deference to a Master who is thought to represent intelligence at its brilliant best and thus by definition quite incapable of simply saying something stupid.

OR PERHAPS NOT. Awful ingredients of doubt begin to eat away at the living statue of the Master. And here I must record that apparently no one in all the French reviews I have read—and all those Paris reviewers know the complete polemical literature in question—has called attention to the fact that the "little phrase" of the title is actually a quotation from a famous put-down by Jean-Paul Sartre. In point of fact, Sartre, when pressed in an argument, very often discovers the ineffable idiocy of those with whom he disagrees. They become not thinkers to be earnestly considered, but mere figures of fun.

Well, in a way, in this novel the knife-like weapon has been turned the other way, and almost literally, for wasn't it Sartre's preface to her first novel which helped the author to her own fame and prestige? Nobody has dared to take on this Master on anything but his own terms: by the time the whole vast *oeuvre* has been mastered, and due respect for its quantity and quality offered, the critics can only take their stand on his home grounds. Here, at long last, one dissenter from the Master has felt free to step outside the framework and look at the whole picture. Every little swish of the brushwork is examined from the outside. Mme Sarraute makes quite a drama and a farce of it.

Still I don't really see this as a *roman à clef* or even as yet another Paris polemic. The pleasure to be derived from this portrait of a Master—and one is even at times also reminded of, say, Jacques Lacan's famous punning—is quite independent of local Left-bank anecdote. Here is the linguistic power of critical semantics linked to the narrative entertainments of a novelist who seems to be renewing herself with the years. As in the work of Franz Hals, the last efforts take on a sovereign youthfulness.

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## BOOKS & WRITERS

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### The American Experience

*Ellmann's Oxford Anthology*—By ANTHONY THWAITE

ONE OF THE MOST certain ways of being put over the literary barrel and thumped into insensibility must surely be to edit an Oxford Book of something-or-other. The mere glimpse of a new anthology in that familiar blue and gold binding is enough to make many reviewers sniff the air and smell blood; "an anthology backed by the authority of a famous publishing house", hissed Donald Davie as he worked himself up to his final onslaught on Larkin's *Oxford Book of Twentieth-Century English Verse* four years ago. And now it's Richard Ellmann's turn to be treated with rage and contempt for his "seriously misleading" (David Bromwich, *TLS*) *New Oxford Book of American Verse*.<sup>1</sup> Men who would otherwise find little room for agreement have congratulated one another on their consensus this time: Donald Davie (again), Jonathan Raban, Edward Lucie-Smith, A. Alvarez. Another Oxford Book bites the dust.

But why? It isn't just a matter of the reviewers carping at omissions; indeed, some of them were in such a lather that they seemed incapable of distinguishing between inclusions and omissions, such as David Bromwich, who abused Ellmann for paying attention to Anne Sexton, a poet whom other reviewers found glaringly absent. (She is—to put the record straight—not to be found in the anthology at all.) A number of reviews made disparaging comparisons with F. O. Matthiessen's *Oxford Book of American Verse*, published in 1950. Yet set the books side by side and the likenesses, through the 19th century and well into the 20th, are much more considerable than the differences. Whitman naturally bulks large in both; Ellmann gives more space than Matthiessen to Emily Dickinson (70 poems to Matthiessen's 47), Emerson and Melville. The earlier 20th-century majors are solidly there in both books: Frost, Stevens, Williams, Pound, Eliot. No one complained, I think, about the

representation of Robinson Jeffers, Marianne Moore, John Crowe Ransom, E. E. Cummings or Hart Crane.

Matthiessen's anthology ended with Robert Lowell—still a youngish poet in 1950, already regarded as the best of his generation. Ellmann backtracks with a number of poets of Lowell's age or slightly younger, making room for quite generous representation of writers who were beginning to find themselves at just about the time Matthiessen was putting the shutters down on his collection: Roethke, Olson, Elizabeth Bishop, Berryman. There then follow the 23 poets who form about the last quarter of the book—and it is here that the chief burden of contentiousness has fallen. As it happens, the poet who follows Lowell in Ellmann (Gwendolyn Brooks, b. 1917) and the final poet in the book (LeRoi Jones, alias Imamu Amiri Baraka, b. 1934) are both of them black. (Ellmann includes two other black poets: Phillis Wheatley, an 18th-century slave from whom he has rescued eight lines; and Langston Hughes. Matthiessen—and this is not to be interpreted as a racist observation—published nothing by blacks.) When I questioned Richard Ellmann about this, in a BBC radio conversation, he said it was "largely accidental that Jones came at the end; but then it seemed to me, yes, it was a good idea, that this was a very important part of our present-day American experience, and if it happened to jibe with an anthology of American poetry so much the better."

It is this sense of "the American experience", bodied forth in Ellmann's anthology, that most reviewers seem so conspicuously to have missed—just as they did with "the English experience" in Larkin's *Twentieth-Century English Verse*. In both books, men like Donald Davie appeared to be looking for some elusive marsh-light called "excellence" which they, as self-appointed guardians of the sacred flame, could recognise when they saw it. What Ellmann, in the radio conversation, called "the tradition of dissent, a kind of latent subversive element . . . beginning with Emerson's

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<sup>1</sup> *The New Oxford Book of American Verse*. Edited by RICHARD ELLMANN. Oxford University Press, £7.50, \$17.50.

attack on the Mexican war and continuing through Whitman's disaffection with the post-war reconstruction, and going on through the Viet Nam war", was pretty well absent from Matthiessen. Making his collection at the end of the Second World War, Matthiessen—like all unprogrammed but discriminating anthologists—consciously or unconsciously performed a public act; as Ellmann said, "I think he did have the feeling of speaking to some extent for the nation, and I don't believe one has to do that any more." Though a man of the left (something one might not guess from the way he slides round the problem of Pound, unlike Ellmann, who confronts the loathsomeness head-on), Matthiessen seems to have had a willingness to acknowledge that plangent patriotism which is a mark of some famous second-rate American poems: Vachel Lindsay's "Bryan, Bryan, Bryan, Bryan", Stephen Vincent Benet's "American Names" ("I have fallen in love with American names. . . Bury my heart at Wounded Knee"), Archibald MacLeish's "American Letter" ("It is a strange thing—to be an American"). Ellmann excludes all these, and it is only in this area of "the American experience" that I feel he is oddly weak. Yet both Matthiessen and Ellmann reflect the spirit of their different times. Matthiessen did his job at the last upsurge of national confidence, Ellmann at a period of profound trauma and uncertainty. Those who miss this, miss the essence of both anthologies.

But there are matters of comparative "excellence" to consider as well. Reviewers who praised Matthiessen for his infallible judgment and condemned Ellmann for amiable inclusiveness might have noted that Ellmann silently removes those meretricious ladies whom Matthiessen accommodated: Amy Lowell, Elinor Wylie, Edna St Vincent Millay. I don't pretend that some of Ellmann's 23 post-Lowell poets are markedly, if at all, better than these (I mutter to myself, "And such as Wylie is shall LeRoi be. . ."); but these three must have looked pretty faded even in 1950. Little patience though I have with the inert maunderings of Robert Duncan, of whom there are twelve pages in the Ellmann, I can't think he is any worse than the six pages of the poem by Howard Baker (b. 1905), "Ode to the Sea", for which Matthiessen found room:

*O first created and creating source,  
Beloved rib of elemental force;  
Being, in whose deep thighs  
Nascence remotely lies,  
Whose golden arms still dripping of the stream  
And liquid eyes inform my deepest dream. . . .*

<sup>2</sup> Even Donald Davie (in *Thomas Hardy and British Poetry*, Routledge, 1973) acknowledged that American poetry is "very chauvinistic" and "reflects the imperious rapacity that created the banana republics."

Ellmann in fact had a far harder task than Matthiessen, and he has discharged it well. Post-war American poetry has reflected not only a crisis of uncertainty but a modern inheritance of what has long been an American literary characteristic: braggart insensitivity, a snarling self-indulgence one hears sometimes in Whitman, often in Sandburg, very often in Pound and his followers—Olson, Galway Kinnell, even in the shamanistic utterings of Edward Dorn and Gary Snyder.<sup>2</sup> Ellmann includes pieces by all these. To have omitted them would have been to give a false picture of the way in which not only America but the whole English-speaking world regards American literature today. As Ellmann puts it in the first sentence of his Introduction: "American poetry, once an offshoot, now appears to be a parent stem."

NOT THAT ELLMANN neglects the wittier and more elegant post-war poets who—not necessarily themselves Anglophile or modelling themselves on British patterns—haven't needed cultist support to get a hearing in Britain. Richard Wilbur, Anthony Hecht, Louis Simpson, James Merrill and (in disputed mid-Atlantic) Sylvia Plath are all here in force. Sound and fury are represented by Ginsberg, plaintive or rancorous female liberation by Denise Levertov (b. Ilford, Essex, 1923) and Adrienne Rich (who, in her first manifestation as Adrienne Cecile Rich in the early 1950s, not represented here, was a consummately deft poet). It is with mildness, not suppressed rage, that I ask such questions as: if Ginsberg, why not Corso (who is at least funny in a sardonic sort of way); if Levertov and Rich, why not Erica Jong, the scalpel-wielding clown of women's lib? If I go on playing the anthology-reviewer's game, I might regret the absence from Ellmann's anthology of Edgar Bowers (but perhaps he is really a one-poem man—"The Mountain Cemetery"—and Ellmann goes for representation in depth), Howard Nemerov, W. D. Snodgrass, X. J. Kennedy, Donald Hall, John Hollander. On the other hand he has had the sense to exclude those whom I label the Three Radical Kenneths (Fearing, Rexroth, Patchen), for which relief much thanks. He has had no truck with the sub-Poundian lunacies of Zukofsky, and the term "Objectivist" is blessedly absent—though Carl Rakosi, who has been enlisted under that strange device, is worth reading and might have been given space. By and large, Ellmann gives a fair-minded picture of the various and contradictory goings-on in American poetry between 1950 and the present day, as well as a considered spread of all that went before, right back 300 years to Anne Bradstreet's *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in*

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## **Oxford University Press**

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*America*, that quaint 1650 title with which the whole thing began.

ONE DISTINCTIVE FEATURE of the history of American poetry is how long it took to establish itself as American. In 1788, a dozen years after the Declaration of Independence, Philip Freneau (in his poem "Literary Importation") could rail against "that damnable place"—England—as the sole source of culture. Half a century later there was Emerson's cultural declaration of independence in "The American Scholar"; but I have the feeling that many people who are vaguely aware of that Emerson lecture, and who can even quote from it the sentence "We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe", haven't actually read it or seen that sentence in its context. What Emerson is actually pleading for is "the study of letters"—scholarship, of a kind; he is not, either directly or, as far as I can see, indirectly, calling for a specifically American creative literature. Poetry, as he sees it in America, is in the future: "Who can doubt that poetry will revive and lead in a new age . . . . I read with some joy of the auspicious signs of the coming days, as they glimmer already through poetry and art, through philosophy and science, through church and state." But all are glimmerings and potentialities.

And that is what one senses hovering behind so much 19th-century American poetry. Bryant, Whittier, Emerson, above all Longfellow, sold in respectable quantities in Britain: "The Courtship of Miles Standish" (a work I remember having fed to me in unpalatable chunks as a schoolboy in Virginia in the 1940s) sold 10,000 copies in London on its publication day in 1858—a scale of success to be matched in contemporary terms only by Tennyson. But for all his native historical narratives of Miles Standish and Evangeline and Hiawatha, Longfellow was irredeemably *English*; that is why the English took to him. Alongside this ran a constant self-consciousness about being American, about establishing individuality and self-reliance (in James Russell Lowell as well as in Emerson); but it took the insolent bravado of Whitman actually to get the job done. It was Whitman who began that "sequence of demolitions" which Robert Lowell (reviewing Larkin's Oxford anthology in *ENCOUNTER* in May 1973) characterised as the paradoxical stereotype of American poetry ever afterwards.

It is this flux, this perpetual revolution, with which Richard Ellmann has had to grapple in compiling his anthology; and because it *is* a flux, every commentator and critic has had to make

his own pattern of it—which is one reason why the reviewers have been so tetchy or contemptuous about this book. All the genealogies, all the apostolic successions, are personal. To some, Poe has become the type-figure of the isolated American artist—more, the *doomed* isolated American artist, and hence the father-figure of a whole necrology of American poets—drunks, drug-addicts, suicides: Hart Crane, Randall Jarrell, Delmore Schwartz, John Berryman, even Sylvia Plath (whom the Americans were just as quick to embrace as the patron saint of the breakdown as the British were). Modern American poets have been obsessively possessive about establishing their poetic ancestors—not only about the big figures (all those poems about, or referring to, or dedicated to Poe, Melville, Whitman, Emily Dickinson) but about the little ones too: Berryman's "Homage to Mistress Bradstreet" is an extended act of piety of this sort. From the first awareness that there was even the possibility of there being such a creature as an American poet, there has been an ambivalence—between (a) wanting to be the voice of the community and (b) realising the gulf that makes this impossible, so that the poet is isolated, to the point even of solipsism. Poetry as megalomaniacally important: poetry as nothing. Hence the schizophrenia which emerges so strikingly from Ellmann's anthology.

What Saul Bellow has called the "great irrepressible solitaires" (such as Poe or Melville or Whitman) set the tone: "They did not emerge from a literary culture nor did they create any such thing." The opulence of Guggenheim Fellowships and creative-writing chairs and Yaddo and the whole panoply of invested American literary culture (those fundings which Auden ironically thanked God for—"The USA, so large, so friendly and so rich") have turned to dust in the mouth. What Ellmann calls "the tradition of dissent"—the individual contention that in some basic, large-scale way, going beyond civics and certainly beyond pleasure, poetry *matters*, and yet that no one listens—has tapered down to the sullen mutterings of Imamu Amiri Baraka:

*I am real, and I can't say who  
I am. Ask me if I know, I'll say  
yes, I might say no. Still, ask.*

*I'm Everett LeRoi Jones, 30 yrs old.  
A black nigger in the universe.*

Isolated, individualistic, provisional, with its perpetual cry of "Make it new", American poetry in the modern era has strangely controlled the English-speaking world, as a by-product of American expansionism. The irony is rich, the poetic results not always so. Those who have not

been able to face this fact have not been able to look at *The New Oxford Book of American Verse* appreciatively, or even temperately. The fault

lies with the critics, not with Richard Ellmann. He has not done a cosmetic job; he has acknowledged, and presented, the truth.

# From Collaboration to Prophecy

## On Leavis—By PHILIP HOBBSBAUM

THE CASE AGAINST F. R. Leavis has been building up for years.

"... Dr Leavis sneers at me for pretending to be 'fair'. Let him rise up early and lie down late, he will never have the faintest notion of the meaning of the word. ... ." (NOËL ANNAN, *TLS*, 1976)

"... as an analysis of contemporary reality Leavis's arguments seem to me pretty well useless. ... ." (CLIVE JAMES, *The Observer*, 1972)

"... Dr Leavis is no longer on the side of life. ... ." (GERALD FOWLER, quoted in the *Daily Telegraph*, 1970)

"... without the necessary talents to lead a seminar. ... ." (C. B. COX, *The Spectator*, 1963)

"... the poverty of his critical faculties and the depth of his ignorance. ... ." (J. H. PLUMB, *The Spectator*, 1962)

One could go further back. Dr Leavis has gathered contumely as other intellectuals do life peerages. How—one wonders—was it done? How could an ignoramus without the talents to lead a seminar or to instruct Mr Clive James about contemporary reality—how could he cause such annoyance among so many established *literati*? No wonder, as Ronald Hayman details in his biography,<sup>1</sup> that in the 'thirties Dr Leavis was passed over for a full-time Cambridge lectureship. No wonder such luminaries as Enid Welsford, T. R. Henn, L. J. Potts and Joan Bennett were promoted ahead of him. No one calls Miss Welsford or Mrs Bennett ignorant or impugns their critical faculties. No one has attacked Mr Henn in the *TLS* or defended him in the *New Statesman*. So far as one knows, there is no impending biography of L. J. Potts. It is not these university teachers but Dr Leavis who, in Mr Hayman's pages, comes across as an indomitable voice, heard through an enormous discord of noises, calling from beyond the gale.

Mr Hayman is the first to attempt a biography of this storm-lashed figure. He is in some danger of representing Dr Leavis as the Captain McWhirr of criticism. It would be interesting to know why he thought himself qualified for the task. Dr Leavis is no unimaginative Ulsterman pushing his

way through *Typhoon*. Though huffed at and puffed at repeatedly by professors and reviewers, he has lived to see them founder. There is thought and creativity in such talent for survival. But Mr Hayman gives only the faintest hint as to the mystery of how it all happened. There is an absence of sharp reaction in his book, probably due to the fact that it appears to be compounded from the kind of casual newspaper cutting that formed the first paragraph of this review. It might do for the first paragraph of a biography, too, but the enquiry needs to be pursued further than that. Such informed opinion as is retailed by Mr Hayman derives from hearsay proffered by a number of witnesses who are duly acknowledged in his preface. It would seem, however, from internal evidence either that these people do not know Dr Leavis very well or else that they were not interested enough to convey with any degree of specificity such knowledge as they had. Mr Hayman himself was at Cambridge in the early 1950s. He must have pondered the reason for the ascendancy that Leavis undoubtedly had over the undergraduates of his time. People from all faculties went to Leavis's university lectures at Mill Lane; some even gatecrashed his seminars at Downing College. We will scan Mr Hayman's biography in vain for any explanation of this.

In many respects the life of a university lecturer is an enviable one. Ten hours' teaching a week, four months' vacation a year, a regular salary, security of tenure—it is all too easy to let oneself drift into complacency. Even so, Mr Hayman will recall that some lecturers in his time had managed to publish a book or two. He gives little indication, however, of how their lectures were formed. Mostly, they consisted of copious excerpts from those same books punctuated by verse or prose quotations of inordinate length, read aloud rather badly. Whatever one thought of Leavis's lecture technique, it amounted to considerably more than that. There was a sense of exploration, of the struggle to wrest analysis into words. He didn't simply repeat work already in the public domain. And his seminars—which Mr Hayman didn't attend—were even more compelling. There was a quality of thinking aloud

<sup>1</sup> *Leavis*. By RONALD HAYMAN. Heinemann, £4.95.

about them that was capable of colouring an undergraduate day. His pupils would, as often as not, leave his room and adjourn to a nearby coffee shop to carry on the discussion among themselves. It was only strangers who treated him as a licensed eccentric or a weathered monument difficult of access. He was always open to question or debate and his writing, unlike that of his colleagues, precipitated itself from his teaching. Many of the formulations that found their way into print had been challenged and honed by a hundred discussions at Downing. The point demands to be made, for several of his books are dedicated to the students he taught or the places of learning where he taught them. Up to, and more or less including, the D. H. Lawrence book of 1955, his work has a singular coherence. *Revaluation and New Bearings* mapped out the terrain of English poetry; *The Great Tradition* and *D. H. Lawrence, Novelist* did the same for the novel. Leavis's views on teaching were given in *Education and the University* and in his introduction to *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge*, and the latter also indicated his line on 19th-century English thought. Any lacunae remaining were filled by the sparkling essays of *For Continuity* and *The Common Pursuit*. Even after 1955, the discussion of prose fiction was further extended by such studies as those of individual works by George Eliot, Mark Twain, Henry James and Joseph Conrad which are found in *Anna Karenina and other essays*. This book was published as late as 1967, but is mostly composed of material from an earlier period.

AROUND 1963, however, a new era had begun. It heralded Leavis's retirement from lecturing at Cambridge and was marked by the publication of his Richmond Lecture on C. P. Snow and the Two Cultures. No lecture ever received more publicity. Partly it was a question of tone. One remembered the wry ironies of *New Bearings* and *The Common Pursuit* which were the results as much of the necessity for compression as of acerbity of temperament. But now one reeled before what amounted to a rhetorical onslaught. In 1963, the ironist was replaced by the prophet:

"There is a prior human achievement of collaborative creation, a more basic work of the mind of man (and more than the mind), one without which the triumphant erection of the scientific edifice would not have been possible: that is, the creation of the human world, including language. It is one we cannot rest on as something done in the past. It lives in the living creative response to change in the present. I mentioned language because it is in terms of literature that I can most easily make my meaning plain, and because of the answer that seems

to me called for by Snow's designs on the university. It is in the study of literature, the literature of one's own language in the first place, that one comes to recognise the nature and priority of the third realm (as, unphilosophically, no doubt, I call it, talking with my pupils), the realm of that which is neither merely private and personal nor public in the sense that it can be brought into the laboratory or pointed to. . . ."

This change of tone, from critic to prophet, brought about uneasiness, even in those basically sympathetic to Leavis's stand. Yes, one felt, an attack on the materialist bias of contemporary education was long overdue, but it was questionable whether Leavis should have been the person to launch it. At this time, however, we can see the lecture in perspective. Startling though the hostile focus on C. P. Snow seemed, the tactical effect was to centre attention on his role as a cultural guru. In the 1950s and 60s, the influence of Snow was pervasive. The universities were told to expand—for what purpose, with what consequences, it didn't much matter. There was a feeling in the Robbins Report that all we had to do was recruit enough undergraduates, preferably in technical subjects, and the millennium would be ours. The motivation of these people and the quality of their education seemed beside the point. In technological universities, such as Sheffield, one was repeatedly faced with undiscussable propositions about the Second Law of Thermodynamics or the use of machine tools, as though they were some kind of substitute for being able to read. By a logical slide, the implication arose that the arts were now parasitic upon the new world that scientists were in process of building. Under guise of constructing a bridge, Snow and his supporters were engaged in raising a barrier. If such attitudes are looked at more critically now, it may be a result of Leavis's lecture on the so-called Two Cultures.

This was the first of a series of discourses gathered together in volumes entitled *English Literature in Our Time and the University* and *Nor Shall My Sword*. These discuss the tendency of present-day society to grow at the expense of what Leavis has called "the human world." What is under criticism is a quantitative view of life couched as a short-term proposition of material advantage. Ultimately it derives from Bentham's dictum, that the end of legislation is the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Its modern application comes across as a belief that the problems of humanity can be settled by higher productivity, higher wages and more extensive leisure. The purposes and responsibilities involved, however, tend not to get discussed.

Leavis, no doubt, draws a grim satisfaction from the thought that what he calls technologico-Benthamite civilisation has collapsed. We now

face one of the worst crises in our history. The seeds of destruction were immanent in the Benthamite ideology. We all remember Mr Macmillan's blithe "You've never had it so good." By inducing the population to think in short terms of material advantage, politicians and their advisers have helped to sever what connection still persisted between labour and management. Mr Wilson at the Labour Conference of 1963 assured us that we only had to automate our industries sufficiently to enter into an economic paradise. Mr Heath promised the Conservative Conference of 1965 a similar prospect contingent upon our entry into Europe. The cry was "growth." But Automation and Europe have let us down, as they were pretty well bound to in default of any more deeply-held motivation or long-term cooperative instinct. The most the world of Bentham could offer would be a technological expanse of council estates, household appliances, second cars, colour television sets and ample leisure in which to enjoy them. Leavis's case was that civilisation would be at risk even if this offer were ratified. "What is man doing...? He is fulfilling the counterpart of labour—the machine works him instead of he the machine."

These are the words of D. H. Lawrence, the Lawrence of *Women in Love*. He acts in Leavis's world as the positive against which the world of Bentham can be set. Lawrence, along with Dickens and Blake, is an enlivening presence in what may be called Leavis's prophetic books: *English Literature in Our Time* and *Nor Shall My Sword*. Eliot occupies a median position, as a writer whose sense of life was not equal to his immense linguistic gift. And the adverse figures in the discourses collected in these volumes are Lord Snow, Lord Robbins, Lord Annan, Mr Wilson, Mr Heath and Mr Fowler. These are the materialists trafficking in politics and education, and they are invoked for their type-qualities as gurus rather than as individuals to be sorted out for criticism.

IT IS THE GREAT WRITERS who emerge as the individuals. Leavis's contributions to *Lectures in America* and to *Dickens the Novelist*, both written in collaboration with his wife, use literary criticism as a means of demonstrating the indivisibility in great literature of content and form. Those writers whom Leavis substantially puts forward seem to him to stand for the imagination in the sense outlined in the Richmond Lecture: the meeting of minds that creates the human world. In an essay on Blake, as yet uncollected, Leavis declares: "The major poet's creativity is heuristic; it is concerned with

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discovery, or new realisation . . . with apprehensions and intuitions that of their nature can't be stated." This belief has launched Leavis into new areas of terminology. These are taken to an extreme in the critical work that buttresses his various prophecies. His most profound book of recent years is perhaps *The Living Principle*. In this, he disposes of the subjective-objective dichotomy in literary and linguistic theory. For Leavis the division between the inner and outer sense is a false one, adumbrated by Descartes and applied to criticism by I. A. Richards, himself a disciple of Bentham. As against this, Leavis takes his stand on the writings of Michael Polanyi and Marjorie Grene. These philosophers attack the idea of impersonal information and value-free science and put forward instead the concept of a world structured by language. Leavis quotes with approval Marjorie Grene's dictum, "The power to generalise which speech demands is the power to sort out according to effective norms both utterances and natural events." Value-judgment, in other words, enters from the beginning into statements of fact. This ties in with Leavis's belief that the most important judgments are found in the work of the great writers. Such apprehensions and intuitions, however, "can't be stated." How, then, is the critic to proceed? Leavis has called the creativity of Blake "heuristic"; that is, exploratory, intuited, prophetic. The word "heuristic" occurs, if the count is right, twenty times in *The Living Principle*, half of them in a discussion of Eliot's "The Dry Salvages" that takes up no more than thirty-three pages of the book. Equally frequent in appearance is "ahnung", which represents apprehension, intuition or foreboding. Hardly less insisted upon is "nisis" which Leavis may have found in Collingwood, where it stands for concentrated effort, a gathering of purpose.

At first one is balked by what seems to be a heaviness of repetition. But the effect, cumu-

latively, is a slow building up in meaning. A word, after all, varies in connotation from context to context, and one context plays a part in the knowledge we have of another. Just as "Burnt Norton" has been said to replace the concepts of "regret" and "eternity", so one could argue that *The Living Principle* modifies the terms "ahnung" and "nisis."

An adverse critic might reply that they need to be modified. But all critical terminology looks odd at its first inception, and the formulations of Leavis may in the long run prove as useful as Eliot's phrase "the dissociation of sensibility", if not Schlegel's concept of "organic form."

*The Living Principle*, however we may feel about its terminology, defines a non-objectivist theory of language by analysing several poems, and, in particular, looking more closely at the *Four Quartets* than any poem was ever looked at before. Like it or not—and the going is often arduous—we are slowly, painstakingly, shown that most of the value of the poem lies in the elliptical "Burnt Norton" and that the ellipsis is symptomatic of a reluctance to face what is positive—symptomatic of a dilemma or an impasse. Leavis indicates further that "East Coker" and "The Dry Salvages" are products of a personal desperation, a sense of failure in life which, paradoxically, is delicately rendered in words. Most conclusively of all, he demonstrates that "Little Gidding" is the failure of the four, where a willed assertiveness of metaphor creates a false sense of exaltation, an emotion not associated with an event. For all his recognition of Eliot's linguistic efficacy, Leavis in his latest book turns to Lawrence as the vital figure of our time.

AT FIRST GLANCE, *Thought, Words and Creativity*<sup>2</sup> seems to be a revision of D. H. Lawrence, *Novelist*, published twenty-one years ago. But the present book takes a highly specific line on the subject. It is an answer to those—chiefly, T. S. Eliot—who found in Lawrence an incapacity for what we ordinarily call thinking. Leavis's earlier essay on "The Captain's Doll" has been considerably tightened up, and the usual argument regarding the story's male chauvinism is refuted by an appeal to mutual recognition of identity. The real triumph of the book, though, is the essay on *Women in Love*. Here Leavis finds the decisive answer to the Benthamite—quantitative, materialistic—view of civilisation. Leavis's earlier discussion of *Women in Love* explicitly recognised the book as a demonstration of insight into the declining values of the West. But that earlier discussion was rather

<sup>2</sup> *Thought, Words and Creativity*. By F. R. LEAVIS. Chatto & Windus, £4.00.

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narrowly literary, showing what this character was doing here and how that scene fitted in there, and the like. The revision in the present book is considerably more than a tidying-up of its previous self. A discussion of the character Gerald Crich winds in and out of Leavis's argument in such a manner as to show that he is the essential datum of *Women in Love*. In this figure of a coal-owner, for whom love is an extension of his impulse to dominate, we have representative modern man. Against him are set in contrast a number of diversely antagonistic figures: aristocrats, Bohemians, artists, the teacher, the visionary. The last, in the person of Birkin, stands for what Lawrence, and, after Lawrence, Leavis regards as the creative imagination and, what goes with it, the inexplicit and almost inexpressible intercourse between husband and wife. In this essay, Leavis achieves almost the impossible: putting into conceptual terms the intuition and effort of Lawrence, the creative artist. A good deal is conveyed by the very form of the argument. It shows Crich set against Birkin; Crich against Gudrun; Crich against Loerke, against Ursula, and, in the end, Crich—proleptically, it seems—caught up, killed and preserved in a world of snow.

Crich in Leavis's book stands for Robbins, Annan, Bentham—all whom he regards as the mechanisers of the human spirit. Though his adverse criticisms are forceful, they are not necessarily rancorous. He bears upon type and influence more than individual character. Nevertheless, even to say this indicates his latter-day unawareness of tonal effect. It is quite natural for people to behave as though a critique of their representative quality is an attack on their personal life. And the person under attack is hardly going to be consoled if one points out that the adverse emphasis of Leavis upon Snow is very much that of Lawrence on Crich. Both Crich and Snow, however, exist for Leavis as Technologico-Benthamite Man. If one were to take the view of Leavis as prophet any further, one would see Snow, Annan *et al.* acting out Leavis's vision of a materialistic society as definitely and mythically as Gerald Crich in *Women in Love* acts out the vision of Lawrence.

BUT LEAVIS'S WORK is not fiction. It carries a heavy weight of concept and embodies an obsessive, almost tentacular, exploration of the area under discussion. To grasp his thinking fully, one would have to work through *The Living Principle and Thought, Words and Creativity* together with the attendant texts—*Four Quartets*, "The Captain's Doll", *Women in Love*, point by point, bit by bit, with the same care and precision as the critic himself. The bonus would be that, in the end, one would have more

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than a passing understanding of Leavis and the art of criticism—no mean art, since so many of us attempt it. One would also have a far greater understanding of some genuinely difficult masterpieces of the twentieth century. But for many, the time taken up would be prohibitive and the calls upon the reader's stamina would be great.

This is perhaps a limiting description of the later Leavis. Can criticism really be an approach in discussion which brings the reader's consciousness into intimate partnership with the intuition and the effort, the "ahnung" and "nissus", that go into a written work? Shouldn't a critic hint an approach, indicate what has been his own experience of frequentation? It is for the reader, surely, to take the road that the critic points towards. A good deal of the particular footwork he must do for himself. To Leavis, such an approach might seem simplistic and reductive, and such terms, certainly, could never be applied to his recent work. He has reached a position where he is able to defy the exigencies of time and space that condition most of us. But such exigencies certainly shaped the tough structure beneath the terse wit that characterised his books and essays in the 'thirties and 'forties.

Would Leavis himself regard his early discussions of Milton, Shelley, Keats, Eliot and Hopkins as reductive? It is true that they don't have the completeness of his recent work. But such completeness bows and bends the reader as though to an irresistible will. The process is coercive, even exhausting, and few will ever be found to allow it to engage them at a level of seriousness that would prove rewarding. In this final period, it will not be the remorseless exposition of Eliot and Lawrence that will gain the most attentive audience. Rather it will be Leavis the Prophet, Leavis the Polemicist—the energy of the rhetoric alone will ensure that. It may be said that the one aspect of the later Leavis buttresses the other. But from both, mutually supporting as they seem, we are liable to turn back to those documents of an earlier period whose incisive wit sent us along a trajectory that re-aligned our bearings in literature.

"To learn as Mr Eliot learnt in general from Laforgue is to be original to the point of genius."  
(*New Bearings in English Poetry*)

"With Dryden begins the period of English Literature when form is associated with Good Form."  
(*Revaluation*)

"We shall not find Swift remarkable for intelligence if we think of Blake."  
(*The Common Pursuit*)

"That the eighteenth century, which hadn't much lively reading to choose from, but had much leisure, should have found *Tom Jones* exhilarating

is not surprising; nor is it that Scott, and Coleridge, should have been able to give that work superlative praise. Standards are formed from comparison, and what opportunities had they for that?"

(*The Great Tradition*)

**D**R LEAVIS OWES his pre-eminence as much to his vitality of writing as to his critical insight. His formulations, backed by argument, prove to be so much more than formulations. They are the starting-points for endless discussion

and re-examination. This earlier work does not attempt, as *Thought, Words and Creativity* so often does, to take over all the discussion from us. It is more a collaboration with the reader—the common pursuit of true judgment—and less of a revelation from the oracle. The professional critic and teacher will find Leavis's final period remarkable, to say the least. But it will not seem so isolated in its superiority if, together with other cultivated adults, he re-explores *New Bearings, Revaluation, The Great Tradition* and *The Common Pursuit*.

## The Long & the Short

*Recent Novels—By* ALAN BROWNJOHN

**O**NCE AGAIN IRIS MURDOCH bears us off into the sophistications and intricacies of her narrative well before it's possible to doubt or question anything at all.<sup>1</sup> *Would* Cato Forbes be able to dispose of a revolver by throwing it, unnoticed, off Hungerford Bridge one April midnight; and if so, why? Never mind, there he is doing it on page one, while his friend Henry Marshalson is flying home from a horrible little Liberal Arts campus in Illinois to take up his inheritance, the lustrous and mouldering Laxlinden Hall, where his mother Gerda chastely cohabits with her wet, elderly admirer. Across the gardens lives John Forbes, whose daughter, Colette, and son, Cato. . . . Miss Murdoch has us fully accepting all these bizarre incidents and subtly interconnected characters already; and indeed, a very good case could be made in favour of all of her novels on solidly reasonable grounds: they are absorbingly readable, endlessly inventive, and crammed with plausibly fantastic people and locations. If you want to know how it might feel to be lost in an Irish bog at night, trapped in a sea cave with the tide rising, or (in *Henry and Cato*) held for ransom in the pitch darkness of a former Top Secret bunker under Notting Hill, Miss Murdoch will tell you.

On the other hand, another case can be made *against* them; perhaps needs to be made against them if critics are going to continue making claims for the gravity of Miss Murdoch's moral statements and the profundity of her insight into authentic modern dilemmas. Simply, the ideas in these novels *are* serious, and the debates her

characters have with each other (and with themselves) are notably intelligent and compelling—but the credibility of most of these people, situations and adventures doesn't finally match the apparent seriousness of the themes.

In *Henry and Cato*, we are back with one of this novelist's perennial preoccupations. The novel is primarily about love: love sacred and profane (and sacred *versus* profane), and the ways in which love may be furthered or blasted by taking thought, or taking action. Henry Marshalson is a nothing, who can scarcely love at all, or only love arbitrarily. Adopting a coy and irritating affectation of style, Miss Murdoch constantly labels him and one or two others with patronising adjectives: "lost Henry", "alienated Henry", and so on; which is quite unnecessary since Henry's moral inertia is finely done anyway, and makes an admirable contrast with the mental activity and anguish of Cato, who needs to feel himself "flooded" with love. Cato, the clerical son of a rationalist father (who gets a cavalier, not to say caricature, treatment from his creator), is falling out of love with Christ as he falls into love with "Beautiful Joe" Beckett, a seventeen-year-old drop-out hustling a living at the wrong end of Ladbroke Grove. But Joe is only drawn to Cato while he is cassoed with the authority of the priest: a "laicised" Cato is not so desirable or reassuring.

So far so good; and the plight of Cato, as his faith first overwhelms him and then subsides miserably into a crude sexual yearning, rings pitifully true. The setting for his agonised mental struggle is also beautifully achieved: a tatty Mission centre in a twilight zone awaiting demolition, it could be round any corner under the shadow of Westway, and is much more

<sup>1</sup> *Henry and Cato*. By IRIS MURDOCH. Chatto & Windus, £4.

credible than Laxlinden Hall, yet another of those grand Murdoch houses for which the novelist assembles décor instead of creating a reality ("beneath the tall chimney piece, carved by a pupil of Grinling Gibbons, a log fire was brightly burning"). The trouble comes with the development (and the dénouement) of this plot; in effect, with the exigencies of those familiar narrative conventions with which Miss Murdoch delights in saddling herself. "Beautiful Joe" has to become much more extraordinary than true, replete with his menacing hexagonal glasses, his well-prepared underground dungeon, and his mastery of the entire range of current nihilistic attitudes. Most of the characters *have* to be taken through astonishing hoops, a flurry of intriguing but unlikely surprises, before reaching one of those tidy yet implausible Murdoch conclusions—with most things safely restored to what they were at the beginning. It won't do. The adroitness of the contrivance distracts the reader's attention from the unbelievable elements; but in the end it terribly undercuts the moral seriousness Miss Murdoch may have been trying to establish. It throws doubt, in retrospect, on the quality of the moral and religious debates, which are often absorbed comfortably enough into an entertaining plot, but don't always re-read very well. . . .

Miss Murdoch's most genuine gift is for detecting the surprise and fascination latent in an ostensibly drab world: over more than twenty years now, one has been persuaded to look through her eyes with renewed interest and freshness at the changing physical and social fabric of England. *Henry and Cato* is, in places, as enthralling as anything she has written; and elsewhere grossly overloaded with oddity and symbolic pretentiousness. World is sadder than we fancy it, to borrow Louis MacNeice's words; if only Miss Murdoch relaxed more into the "suddenness" of things, which she handles so brilliantly, and worried less about weighting every book with up-to-the-minute metaphysical wisdoms!

DAVID STOREY'S *Saville*<sup>2</sup> has been received tepidly in some quarters: for being allegedly slow and jejune as well as long; for being another, and a lesser, *Radcliffe*; for going painstakingly yet again over the well-trodden ground of the latter-day working-class novel. Most of this is unjust, though the novel does have some serious weaknesses. The plot edges forward, in a

long procession of self-contained episodes, through the childhood, adolescence and young manhood of Colin Saville, miner's son and scholarship boy.

The steady (and some have said relentless) accumulation of physical detail—we know intimately the house, the backyard, the furniture, the kettles—seems at first deliberately artless, and dogged. But it gradually becomes clear that it represents a very conscious refusal on the novelist's part to be compromised by attempting, on some principle or other, to select and whittle down. The detail must go in because it was there; and Mr Storey builds it intricately and vividly into the very beings of his characters: the bright orange rulers of the 11-plus candidates, the quill-shaped silver tiepin lavished on Colin by his rich schoolfriend, the illicit cigarettes, the tinned fruit on the tea-tables. In the same way, everything has to centre on Colin himself, and be seen to relate directly to him; so that "his father" and "his mother" scarcely get names, and get hardly any of the action outside the orbit of Colin's own activities. But it's nevertheless a novel about a whole generation moving forward, and upward, in uncertain ways, forging ambiguous success or coming to grief.

It becomes clear also that the novel moves in a series of nicely calculated and finely ironic juxtapositions, mostly of details from Colin's world of poverty and effort and the insolent ease and abandon of the middle-class living to which the Grammar School gives him access. Mr Storey is too intelligent to labour contrasts with the usual crudity: it's a matter of simply letting Colin's visit to the sumptuous and chaotic household of the wealthy Staffords, and young Neville Stafford's innocent escapades with his air gun, follow the tea in the miner's home and the visit to the sewage farm hideout where the local delinquents tote their unloaded revolver. Infalibly, without any taint of obviousness, Colin discovers his achievements turning to ashes: his middle-class girl friends coolly slip away, Stafford betrays him, his efforts to brighten up the awful school which employs him procure his dismissal, and he ends up floundering in ambivalent attitudes, questioning the sense in the effort which raised him from the prospect of the pit. *Saville* manages to document the upward mobility of a working-class boy in the insidious labyrinths of the English class system more sharply and movingly, *because* no particularity has been spared, than almost any other novel one can think of.

The difficulty comes when Mr Storey feels he has to suggest some way out for Colin, some release into a better existence (and was it necessary?). The response of the children to the parents'

<sup>2</sup> *Saville*. By DAVID STOREY. Cape, £4.50.

pressures, the backlash of social bewilderment, the assumption, even, of the parents' own attitudes—Colin's puritanism with his younger brother—are all thoroughly convincing. But the sudden speeding-up at the very end, with the mining community dwindling away, and a curiously muted love affair (with a woman borrowed from a character called Philip Callow) which emancipates Colin and enables him to take the train for London—all this is decidedly *not* convincing.

It's as if the novelist did not know how to stop the huge machine, and can only trundle Colin off out of its range, with some perfunctory hints (the nearest thing to cliché in the book) that he may have a writer's future ahead of him.

**S**HEILA REDDEN, in Brian Moore's new novel,<sup>3</sup> is married to Kevin, a conscientious and, one would say, decent doctor, working in cooperation with the army in his area of Belfast. Kevin is also a boor, and a philistine, which might seem a bit secondary in these circumstances, but the purpose of *The Doctor's Wife* is to show how Mrs Redden, an intelligent and sensitive 37-year old, falls out of marriage and Belfast into, first, something akin to a "state of grace" in a love affair with a young American, and then into deliberate oblivion. By the end, she has abandoned home and family, and opted to disappear like "the ordinary man who goes down to the corner to buy cigarettes and is never heard from again." (She has, as a small concession to the reader's curiosity, gone to work in a laundry shop in Belsize Park.) Out of all the tangled personal and political implications of this situation, Mr Moore could have made an absorbing novel; he has chosen to write a strangely flimsy one.

By far the most interesting issues are raised when Mrs Redden's affair meets the complex, puritanical values of her society head-on: husband Kevin and brother Owen want to make her infidelity an aberration, a treatable disease. "Now they can't put the fear of God into you they put the fear of madness instead", she says; and briefly a whole cultural context is displayed, something which, if brought into the foreground of the narrative, could have made the novel seem far more vital and arresting. Similarly, the sense of the distant violence in Belfast is contrasted with the sun-bathed love scenes in Villefranche but this is a casual sort of counterpointing which loses its effect with the odd unreality of the idyll itself. Mr Moore employs some creaking tech-

<sup>3</sup> *The Doctor's Wife*. By BRIAN MOORE. Cape, £3.50.

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nical manoeuvres to bring, and keep, Mrs Redden and young Tom Lowry together; yet gives Tom as shadowy and insubstantial a characterisation as is compatible with his brawny sexual prowess in several over-long sequences of raw lovemaking. Over *The Doctor's Wife* hangs a distinct whiff of stylistic calculation, and preciousness, draining life from these people and their problems, which are harrowing and believable enough; one wishes Mr Moore a return to better form.

**P**IERS PAUL READ'S *Polonaise*<sup>4</sup> was at least mooted as a candidate for Booker honours, and it certainly deserves marks for originality and enterprise. The subject is a whole swathe of modern Polish history, mediated through the fortunes of the Kornowskis, a once-landed family who live through it from 1924 to the brink of war in 1939, then re-surface in Paris and England in the late 1950s. The plot bustles along rapidly and quite grippingly, resourcefully developing the characters of the brother and sister, Stefan and Krystyna Kornowski, as they are swept along in, and changed by, the political currents of the period: victims of history with just enough pride and resilience to survive, even

if it requires unrespectable expedients. Chronicles of this kind often need to introduce historical events and background detail wilfully, to remind us that they existed, but Mr Read avoids the trap and (except where a once-glimpsed figure in Paris *could* be the future President Tito, and the polonaise takes on a momentary *Ragtime* lilt) keeps the whole thing natural and credible.

For all that, *Polonaise* has the air of a conscious *tour de force*, and one wonders whether this accomplished and zestful tale of an upright, dignified sister and a fantasising, dilettante brother *had* to be set in pre-war Poland for any reason except that it was a skilful and venture-some thing to do? The tragi-comedy of their decline is as much in themselves as in their stars, or in their nationality. It has to be said, though, that *Polonaise* is much more entertaining, its comedy much more incisive and its politics more convincing while it stays in Poland than when the action moves to England. The later sequences are full of that uneasy and irrelevant-seeming fascination with English upper-class rituals that one saw in *The Upstart*. Isn't the impact of ideas and events on people something which happens to the English as well as to foreigners? Even if it doesn't, and Mr Read's turreted Mulford Park is all we are really about, the end of *Polonaise* is still a crazy tying of loose ends, and a let-down.

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**W**HO OTHER THAN Kurt Vonnegut<sup>5</sup> can have the reader laughing aloud on one page and flinching with horror on the next? One thus comes hopefully but warily to each new book, looking forward to the jokes, and dreading the nightmares: *Mother Night* and *Slaughterhouse Five* still occasionally keep me awake. *Slapstick* is less deadly on both scores. Mr Vonnegut begins promisingly, with some autobiographical reflections on how this fantasy came to him. He is always best when he keeps the humour and the horrors tethered to reality at some point; so the promise of this mordantly exuberant opening is not fulfilled when he launches into the pretty strained extravaganza which follows. This is about deformed twins, who appear imbecilic but are actually highly intelligent, one of whom discovers that gravity actually *varies* from time to time, becomes the very last President of the United States, and creates a new kind of extended family by giving thousands of people the same whimsical names ("Daffodil", "Chipmunk"). The idea of the Church of Jesus Christ the Kidnapped is promising, but rather under-exploited; and the

<sup>4</sup> *Polonaise*. By PIERS PAUL READ. The Alison Press/Secker & Warburg, £3.90.

<sup>5</sup> *Slapstick*. By KURT VONNEGUT. Cape, £3.50.

wheeze of the minuscule Chinamen is too easy, as is the final *deus ex machina* of the Albanian killer flu. Not vintage Vonnegut this time.

**S**LAPSTICK IS A SHORT BOOK in large print, done in the usual Vonnegut style in small sections with a joke, or a sigh of resignation at the ways of mankind at the end of each ("So it goes" has softened into a quiet "Hi ho"). It's much the shortest of this batch, and only *The Doctor's Wife* (277 pp.) is what one has come to think of as "average" in length. *Henry and Cato* and *Polonaise* are substantially longer, and *Saville* is longer still. So taking up a clutch of new novels like this induces some wry reflections on the pundits' prophecies of a year or two ago.

Admittedly the terse, throwaway novel is a favoured form, and brief, intense, sometimes minimalist and experimental, fictions are still with us. But those head-shaking predictions that the novel of the '70s would need to be fairly tiny to survive, whether in economic or literary terms, seem to have lost some of their strength. Come to think of it, the paperback top-sellers on the supermarket racks are none of them calculatedly sparing in length: in fact, a "popular" read almost *has* to be a "good" read. It may be too early to be positive, but the novel may have come through another of its crises. And would it be fair to guess that this is because novelists have been sufficiently stubborn about the length and the form *they* want to have won a small battle against a creeping failure of nerve?

### Changed Hands

There are two men cleaning the windows,  
it is a very long time since they were cleaned.  
The man who lived here before us  
was so rich he had no need to look out  
to see his horizons.

He owned nearly a century when he died  
and two acres, his two ungrateful children  
looked unhappy as though it was a habit.  
Older than us, they were covered in dust  
they couldn't wait to shake off.

Both shook with neurosis, he stuttered,  
she trembled and the housekeeper took pills,  
tranquillisers to keep her hand steady  
as she set the trays; she managed well enough.  
She made a good cup of tea.

Now we run the house, by running upstairs  
and downstairs, and by not meeting.  
The servants who worked here wasted time  
arguing demarcation lines and had never  
read Parkinson, nor had the bosses.

I know because the gardener tells me so,  
peeping between thorny scrawny roses.  
I kneel on the other side of the bed;  
if I stood up I would be weighed down  
by fifty years of garden gleanings.

Madam has been dead for seven years, Master one,  
and the dell is full of children making hay  
while the summer lasts. It is now time  
to look in and out of the windows of this house.  
Soon it will be painted, the windows will wink.

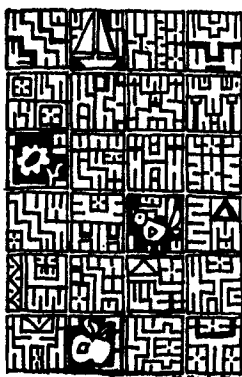
*Pamela Lewis*

## AUTHORS & CRITICS

### After the Cyril Burt Case

# The Detractors

By John Cohen



"WHO IS BURT?" asked H. G. Wells, when I brought up his name in a conversation. This question caused my estimation of both of them to shrink a little: of Wells because he had not heard of my professor, of Burt because he was unknown to Wells.

Today, no one needs to ask such a question. For Cyril Burt's fame as chief prestidigitator of science has now reached the Anthropophagi of the Gobi Desert, to whom the Piltdown Skull, by comparison, has come to seem a mere peccadillo. Reading, as they must, *Science*, and the denunciations of Burt in the *Sunday Times*, what other conclusion could the Anthropophagi possibly arrive at? And any lingering doubts would be dispelled by the chorus of vilifying voices, reverberating inharmoniously, first in the columns of the secular *Times*, and then in *Time*. Leaving no truth unturned, the American *Time* excelled in its indefatigable search for imposture. It is not impossible that excessive exposure to the noxious fumes of Watergate may have dulled its faculty for distinguishing black from white. "At best", says *Time*, without batting an eyelid, "Burt's methods were incredibly sloppy. The raw sheets on the twin studies were among papers stuffed into half a dozen tea chests and later destroyed. . . ." "Sloppy" is the very last word one would use for the precise and punctilious Burt. It was not he who stuffed papers into tea chests, and the destruction took place after his death.

In fact, never was a bigger mountain made of a

smaller molehill. For reasons not worth talking about, the name of an illustrious scholar, Cyril Burt, a polymath of Renaissance dimensions, has been dragged in the mud.

HOW DID IT ALL BEGIN? An alert detractor, bemused by Leon Kamin of Princeton, was on the point of delivering the *coup de grâce* to Burt's immortal soul when he was greatly affrighted. Before his eyes there passed an apparition. It was none other, he swore, than the shade of Margaret Howard, who, as Burt's co-author, was destined to lead, within the confines of his disordered fantasy, a pale, spectral and dis-carnate existence. Her name, with those of other disconsolate phantoms of Burt's *opera*, had been used by him, suggests the *New York Times* (22 November 1976), "as pseudonyms for his own writing about his work." Unnerved as if in the presence of Banquo's ghost, the words of Macbeth leapt to the detractor's mind:

*What man dare, I dare:  
Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,  
The arm'd rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger;  
Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves  
Shall never tremble. . . .*

At cock-crow the wraith fled, for at that magic hour Miss Howard's embodiment and carnification were unequivocally proclaimed. I had, indeed, often met her, and I recall her roundish face, her pleasing smile, her brown eyes and bobbed auburn hair, her slightly-tinted spectacles, and her competence in mathematics.

If so, where is she now? The answer, quite naturally, was provided by Mr Khrushchev (though he nowhere hinted that she was a Russian spy or had defected). After he toppled from power an inquisitive journalist enquired why he no longer appeared in public. "You know", replied Mr Khrushchev, "people sometimes get ill, and they even die. . . ." If Miss Howard has not succumbed to illness or death, I can understand why, like Brer Rabbit, she prefers to lie low, rather than become embroiled, after 25 years, in a fruitless squabble.

FROM PHANTOM TO FRAUD is but a short step. The detractors presently fastened their teeth on the charge that Burt falsified his data to suit his theories; the statistical equivalent of 20 Colorado beetles were said to have been found in Burt's papers. Skilled entomologists have now identified them as innocuous ants in transit. Not a vestige of evidence exists which could support an allegation of fraud.

Mr Kamin, *fons et origo* of the hullabaloo, seems a trifle ambivalent. He is reported as saying, in the *Sunday Times* (24 October 1976), that

"THE CYRIL BURT CASE" by Dr H. J. Eysenck was published in the January ENCOUNTER. This article is by another of Sir Cyril Burt's students; he is Professor of Psychology at the University of Manchester and author of *Homo Psychologicus* (1971) and *Psychological Probability* (1972).

"the first serious Burt paper on twins was the work of a 72-year-old gentleman with strong opinions."

Six weeks later, *Time* (6 December) quotes him as saying:

"It was a fraud linked to policy from the word go. The data were cooked in order for him to arrive at the conclusion he wanted."

"The word go" must mean half a century earlier—when Burt was 22 years of age he must have embarked on a career of carefully planned crime that he was to enjoy for 66 uninterrupted years!

This elderly gentleman, be it noted, evidently in his dotage, still retained enough strength to pour out, in the next decade or so, some 140 papers and chapters of the highest quality, on a wide range of subjects, in British, American, French, Italian, Australian, Indian and other journals, apart from several books. This list includes (as one item) 14 articles in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*; the Galton Lecture (1955); the Bingham Lecture (1957); the F. W. H. Myers Memorial Lecture (1968); and the E. L. Thorndike Award Address (1971), following hot on the heels of the Maudsley Lecture and the Hobhouse Memorial Lecture.

No one would have dared, while Burt was alive, to cast such aspersions on his character, for, with a mind as sharp as a razor blade and with his unrivalled mastery of disparate disciplines, he could easily have made short shrift of his critics. The relatively few discrepancies or errors in the vast mass of his publications and papers can be explained by slips in copying from one document to another; by the fact that, lacking anything remotely like adequate filing and retrieval facilities, he was compelled to rely on his memory; or by some similar venial weakness to which mortal man is heir.

UNLIKE HIS DETRACTORS, Burt was not granted absolute infallibility, and he was grateful if an error he made was brought to his notice. Here is an example. In May 1971, a few months before he died, I drew his attention to a slip in an article<sup>1</sup> of his that had appeared in 1966. He was discussing the basic formulae of information theory, and said he was giving the mathematical expression for the total number of messages that could be composed from a given repertoire of signs. In fact, however, it was an expression for the reciprocal of this number.

In thanking me, Burt explained: "I don't have the typed copy I sent to Chicago; but, in the

manuscript draft I have kept, I see I gave a longish verbal account of the method of estimating 'the number of possible messages' (*i.e.* of  $m$ ), and Equation (i) is for  $\frac{1}{m}$ , as the rest of the paragraph, I think makes clear. Evidently, in abridging the argument in the typed draft I must have telescoped the two, or possibly the typist did. It was careless of me to miss the consequent confusion when reading over the final copy. . . ."

This illustrates how a mistake can arise, how ready Burt is to admit it, and what a "natural" one it is. Let him who is without mistakes throw the first stone.

READERS OF ENCOUNTER will surely recall that when Pythagoras was offered, by his father Mercury, any gift save immortality, he chose a memory that would *never* fail. Burt's father was not a god, only a country doctor. So the prodigious memory with which he endowed his son did sometimes fail. It was a memory which, both in its capacity, that is, the number of "bits" of information it could store, and in its efficiency, as indicated by the proportion of errors in retrieval, was far and away out of the ordinary. I can only marvel at the feats Mnemosyne allowed him to accomplish. Nevertheless, I feel it my solemn duty to disclose to the world one of Burt's monumental blunders: he once addressed a Dr A. J. Marshall as "Albert", although his real name is "Alec", and his friends call him "Tim." It is not to be ruled out that even Pythagoras might have erred in this way, by calling Alcmaeon "Albert", if he had not prudently abstained from beans.

In all the years I knew Burt, in the many discussions I had with him, and in the copious correspondence I maintained with him on a range of technical topics until his death, I invariably found him to be an impeccable and meticulous investigator. I cannot imagine that this man, who spared himself no pains to check every figure, every statement and every source, should stoop to the base and silly stratagems of which he is accused. We must therefore feel profoundly indebted to his magnanimous critics for the rare opportunity they have given us to vindicate the good name of Cyril Burt.

MANY PEOPLE SEEM TO THINK that his reputation stands or falls by his studies of mental inheritance. Nothing could be further from the truth. His fame as scholar and scientist would be unaffected even if he had never written a single word on this vexed topic. Among his favourite papers, "Correlations between Persons" (1937) is a novel application of matrix algebra to psychological problems; "Definition and

<sup>1</sup> "Information Theory and Aesthetic Education", *Journal of Aesthetic Education* (1966), vol. 1, pp. 55-69.

Scientific Method" (1958) is a magisterial disquisition; while "Quantum Theory and the Principle of Indeterminacy" (1958) is perhaps the only serious attempt to establish a link between psychology and theoretical physics. His chief book, *The Factors of the Mind* (1940), which expounds methods of factor analysis to which he made essential and original contributions is, in scope and depth, in a class of its own.

In 1960, when he was 77, readers of the *British Journal of Statistical Psychology* were astonished to find an article by him on "Hebrew Psychology and Current Psychological Concepts", which displayed an intimate knowledge of Biblical Hebrew and the associated literature extending to neo-Platonism. No one dreamed that Burt had this kind of thing tucked away somewhere inside him. It would take a man of average height and weight a good ten years of lucubration before he could contemplate such an article. Burt wrote me that the topic was one of his hobbies.

Throughout the correspondence about Burt, there runs the assumption that the idea of mental inheritance originated with Francis Galton. This is not true. The idea was generally assumed in the mid-19th century. This, I think, is evident from Henry Morley's remark about Jerome Cardan, possibly the greatest mathematician of the 16th century. Cardan, he said, "inherited much innate power: from his father, aptitude for exact learning; from his mother, much vivacity of wit."<sup>2</sup>

Of course, this is vague and cannot be substantiated. The point is this: there can be no question that the "inequality of man" (in J. B. S. Haldane's phrase) is a genetic fact of life, and that there are innate differences of "mental potential" within families and between families. What we do not know is *the nature of the differences*. Nor do we know how these differences, which cannot exist in a social vacuum, interact with environmental differences. It follows that we

are in no position to speak of inborn ethnic or racial differences in "ability."

I OUGHT NOW TO EXPLAIN, in so far as space permits, how it came to pass that I incline to this view, and how my faith in "intelligence" and its testing first began to waver, before curdling into heresy. We must go back to the earlier part of World War II. A first-class row was brewing over the state of affairs in the Middle East, where Mr Churchill was eager to build up a strong force to repel the enemy. Soldiers for this force were provided by the various commands in the United Kingdom, each of which grabbed the opportunity of getting rid of those men for whom it had no use. So it transpired that entire units in the Middle East consisted of rejects—mental defectives, psychopaths, and other unfortunates who should never have been accepted in the first place.

When this skeleton in the cupboard was brought to light, Sir Stafford Cripps, Lord Privy Seal, was charged with the task of ensuring that adequate selection, training and allied psychological procedures were effectively introduced into the armed forces. Committees were at once appointed: a Ministerial Committee on the Work of Psychologists and Psychiatrists in the Services, and a corresponding Expert Committee (plus its sub-committees).<sup>3</sup> I was the secretary dealing with technical aspects of the work.

The most influential member of the Expert Committee was Sir Frederick Bartlett, Professor of Experimental Psychology at Cambridge. Perhaps it is as well that, thanks to Bartlett's good offices, Professor Burt, an obvious choice, was kept out of the Expert Committee—which was described, by the Lord President of the Council, because of its incessant bickering, as a "bear-garden" (actually, bears don't bicker, and their gardens are tranquil). Bartlett—who had himself dabbled, without notable success, in pilot selection, vigorously opposed the selection procedures, on the basis of intelligence and other tests, introduced by the Army, as well as the War Office Selection Boards established to select officers. He believed that this was all a waste of time, and that the "evidence" in favour of both types of procedure was unconvincing. In this belief he had strong allies at the Ministry of Labour and National Service. If they had had their way (as they told me) they would have closed down the entire army selection services in which by 1943, some 1,000 men and women were involved in one way or another. Leading this opposition was the Minister of Labour and National Service, Ernest Bevin, next to Churchill the most powerful figure in the British War Cabinet.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Morley, *Jerome Cardan, The Life of Girolamo Cardano of Milan* (London, 1854), vol. I, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> The final document, which it was my task to draft, appeared in 1947 (Privy Council Office, *Report on an Expert Committee on the Work of Psychologists and Psychiatrists in the Services*, London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1947).

Fearing some sort of repercussions, the authorities would have preferred to suppress it, but were prevented from doing so by questions raised in the House of Commons. Eventually, Mr Norman Brook (later Lord Normanbrook), Secretary to the Cabinet, called me in and asked: "Would the clamour die down if we publish this Report?"

It struck me at the time as a little odd to make an important decision merely to discourage clamour. Possibly the attainment of "a quiet life" must always be the prime object of government policy.

At the end of the War the army psychologists and psychiatrists proposed "a civil resettlement scheme" whereby the military selection machinery would be put, so to speak, in reverse, and service men and women, on demobilisation, would be guided towards civilian training and employment just as they had been directed into the various army units.

A meeting of the Ministerial Committee was convened. Mr Bevin sat down with a great pile of army documents in front of him. My seat happened to be next to his. "This", he announced, in a peremptory voice, placing his heavy hand on the pile, "is bunk." Mr Attlee, in the Chair, looked glum. He was leaning forward, his elbows resting on the table, his head buried in his hands, his pate gleaming.

"Psychologists", Mr Bevin continued, "are Fascists. They want to divide people into two classes, those who pass tests and those who fail them. War is mad, and you need madmen to fight it." I was horrified by what I heard, but a seed of Cartesian doubt stuck in my mind.

IN THE FOLLOWING YEARS I began to suspect that the I.Q., like the "intelligence" testing on which it is based, suffers from serious limitations. First of all there is the arbitrariness of the *content*, whether the test is verbal, non-verbal or based on some "performance." Then there is the arbitrariness of the *method* and interpretation of results whereby evidence is adduced in support of the hypothesis of an "innate factor of general ability." Burt argued that the general factor can be most readily discerned in the youngest age-groups, yet he concedes that J. P. Guilford, employing similar methods, "finds no evidence for general ability", even in his studies of young children.<sup>4</sup>

Some critics have added that, in any event, there is little practical point in studying mental inheritance because it cannot be directly measured in the case of any individual child. It is only fair to add that Burt replied cogently to this particular objection.

A second limitation of the I.Q., as developed in Western countries, is its "culture-bound" character. In my own studies of children reared in different cultures I have found that these tests are comparatively useless for assessing "mental potential." The tasks themselves mean nothing to the child; nor, often enough, does the requirement to complete them as quickly as possible.

<sup>4</sup> Cyril Burt, "The Genetics of Intelligence", *The Toronto Symposium on Intelligence* (1969), pp. 15-28. J. P. Guilford, *The Nature of Human Intelligence* (1967).

<sup>5</sup> J. W. Berry and P. R. Dasen (eds.), *Culture and Cognition* (1973), p. 424.

During the last few years, a large body of information has accumulated (from investigations in many countries) indicating that the concept of "intelligence", subject to very diverse interpretations among Western theorists, has no counterpart in many other parts of the world. In this context the reader may be referred to a recent compilation in which the editors suggest that it is impossible to make the measurement of intelligence "culturally-neutral" through culturally-independent ('culture-free', 'culture-fair' or 'culture-reduced') measures. . . ."<sup>5</sup>

WE SHOULD BE DOING BURT a grave injustice, however, if we lumped him with those who extended their "explanations" of I.Q. differences within Western white groups to differences between ethnic groups. He expressly emphasised that he had never

"attempted to reach any overall statement about the relative contributions of heredity and environment to mental efficiency or 'intelligence' (in the popular sense), but merely to determine how much they contribute to assessments made by this or that procedure . . . the results hold *only for a population brought up in a certain restricted environment*. [my italics]."

Nevertheless, my scepticism remains even after allowing for this "restricted environment." In 1945 Burt wrote to me:

"I am inclined to agree with those persons whom you quote as believing that it would be impossible to increase the intake to universities without lowering the standards of achievement."

In my own experience, a tenfold increase in the intake of students has not resulted in any perceptible lowering of standards. If anything, standards have steadily become more stringent; and if there is any scraping of the barrel, as was ominously foretold, it is perfectly inaudible.

A THIRD LIMITATION relates to questionable assumptions underlying the idea of a psychological "test." The word "test" originally denoted a cupel used for assaying gold and silver alloys. In psychology it seems to signify a sampling device. The test presumably samples a population of potential "traits" or capabilities. But we have no independent way of specifying this population. We do not know, therefore, *what* we are sampling. The assumption that there exists a fixed and immutable number of intellectual components from which we are drawing a fair sample seems totally unwarranted. For we know little about these components. And what we do know about the "fine grain" of the mind, in the context of perception, language, reasoning, memory, imagination and conjecture, lends no support to the belief that it can be measured as, say, height can be.

A fourth limitation I regard as the most serious. The I.Q., at its best, tells us little, namely, that the child is no worse than *that*. The tests on which it is based consist of questions to which the answer is known. They seem to reflect an educational system in which children are brought up to believe that the answers to all questions are either known to the teacher or can be looked up at the end of the book.

Nor should it be forgotten that contemporary testers have moved far from Binet's original conception of "intelligence", which many of them purport to be measuring, as is indicated by his clear statement:

"Our examination of intelligence cannot take account of all those qualities, attention, will, regularity, perseverance, teachableness and courage, which play so important a part in school work, and also in after life; for life is not so much a conflict of intelligences as a struggle between characters."<sup>6</sup>

Even so, intelligence tests leave out of account all that is conjectural and all that is "imaginative." Yet the most intriguing and problematic situations are perhaps those in which *the question is not known*. If it is known, there may be no single, correct answer. In everyday life, in social and political affairs, in philosophy, the arts and the sciences, this is often typically the case. The I.Q. fails to tap our resources for dealing with these situations.

THE FACT THAT I REGARD the I.Q. as subject to these (and other) limitations in no way discredits

<sup>6</sup> "L'Année Psychologique" (1908), p. 77, cited in *Psychological Tests of Educable Capacity* (Hadow Report) (Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1924), p. 93.

<sup>7</sup> P. B. Shelley, "Speculations in Metaphysics (A Fragment)", IV, in *Essays and Letters* (1886).

Burt. No one today believes a word that Aristotle said. But his greatness is not diminished thereby. He is judged, historically, in the light of his time, not in that of ours. Standing on Burt's shoulders we think we can see further than he could. But his achievement, and a very human one at that, remains, and can never be undone.

It would, therefore, have been more merciful if, instead of waiting to destroy his name after his death, Burt's detractors had thrust their venom-tipped quills into him while he was still alive. He would then have suffered no harm, apart from dying. They have preferred to consign him, for all eternity, to the Eighth Circle of Hell, together with all other imposters, forgers, and those who deceive by speech under false pretences. There is one redeeming feature. Dante can look forward to an instructive discussion on nature *v.* nurture when he revisits his Inferno.

Theories in science, we must bear in mind, rarely meet a violent death. Criticism, abuse, and polemic generally leave them more or less unharmed. They lose interest and become obsolete when they are superseded by other doctrines, which, in their turn, will one day suffer the same inexorable fate. That is why the cantankerous debate over the heritability of the I.Q. is sterile. The more ferocious the attack the more determined the defence. As I see it, both the Hereditarians and the Environmentalists are *barking up the wrong tree*, on opposite sides.

Let me give Shelley the last word:

"Most of the errors of philosophers have arisen from considering the human being in a point of view too detailed and circumscribed. He is not (only) a moral and intellectual—but also, and pre-eminently, an imaginative being. . . ."

And, I would add, a conjectural being, who lives by his "guesses."

## Absence

I have heard of an island  
With only one house on it.  
The gulls are at home there.  
My perpetual absence  
Is a way of leaving  
All the eggs unbroken  
That litter the ground  
Right up to its doorstep.

Michael Longley

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## LETTERS

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### Beloff's Labour Party

IN DISCUSSING "Hailsham's Solution" (January 1977), Professor Max Beloff pretends to paint a picture of the Labour Party which, however, is only a caricature of the real state of affairs—and he must know that.

According to him, the Labour Party "has now become" something it has not been before, while in reality that party, famous for its internal contradictions and conflicts, has remained what it always has been. Michael Foot and Tony Benn are accused of proclaiming and the rest of the party of tacitly accepting the claim that the Labour Party "is not just another political party", but to the best of my knowledge they have never said anything of that kind. The Labour Party is now, we are told, "the political wing of the labour movement", but it had played just this role since 1900. This movement, Professor Beloff pontificates,

"which began by seeking legitimate redress for the underprivileged has now become an instrument for reshaping society on the socialist-collectivist model whether by parliamentary or more direct means as occasion dictates."

It is difficult to disentangle all the misrepresentations pressed into this sentence. Since 1918 the Labour Party has stated that legitimate redress for the underprivileged can satisfactorily be achieved only by reshaping society on socialist lines which need not necessarily be collectivist ones. Nothing has changed in that respect. Neither in the past nor now has the Labour Party ever deviated from strictly adhering to parliamentary methods.

I am not a special admirer of Mr Benn, who some time ago, for tactical reasons of his own, stated that the Labour Party's socialism was not influenced by "German books" and, for different tactical reasons, now emphasises the great influence Marxism exerted on Labour Party thinking. The party had always had its dreamers, its realists and, last not least, its demagogues. But it is a slur unworthy of a university teacher to say that

"the Labour Party and the Unions . . . are led . . . now . . . by men who do not accept the constitution except where it works in their favour."

Professor Beloff should not forget that the old Roman maxim "*Quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi*" applies in reverse, too: "*quod licet agitatori, non licet professori*."

J. W. BRUEGEL

London

DESPITE MR BRUEGEL'S REFERENCE to my professorial status, I will resist the temptation to give him the tutorial he so obviously needs. I suggest he asks one of his socialist friends whether any meaning is to be attached to "reshaping society on socialist lines which need not necessarily be collectivist ones." On a more substantive point, he can hardly deny that the trade

unions quite openly sabotaged the Industrial Relations Act of the last Conservative government and were not discouraged in so doing by the Labour movement's political wing. As for Labour's own Act and the threat to press freedom that it implies, I need hardly retrace the ground covered by *R* in the January ENCOUNTER. The Labour Party did once resemble Mr Bruegel's description—it does so no longer. Perhaps Bruegel is just a pseudonym for Rip Van Winkle.

MAX BELOFF

University College  
Buckingham

### "An End to 'An Adventure'"

WITH THE GREATEST RESPECT, Dame Joan Evans is too categorical in declaring that a full explanation has at last been found for *An Adventure* [ENCOUNTER, October 1976]. She bases her discovery on suggestions made by Philippe Jullian in his biography of Robert de Montesquiou, but she produces no hard evidence.

The point at issue is to establish whether Comte de Montesquiou rehearsed *tableaux-vivants* at the Petit Trianon in 1901 in August, a time of year when it was considered social death not to be in the country (which would have excluded Versailles). Dame Joan believes that he was at Versailles, in his house in the Avenue de Paris which had a gate to the park and a private key. Not only is the Avenue de Paris a considerable distance from the park, and even more so from the Petit Trianon, but, elsewhere in his book, Monsieur Jullian states that after 1894 Montesquiou left Versailles to live on the Rive Gauche and later at Neuilly.

This being so, it is more difficult to accept that the two officials of whom Miss Moberly and Miss Jourdain asked the way at the beginning of their walk could have been Montesquiou and his intimate companion and secretary, the Peruvian Gabriel Yturri. Since it was only Miss Moberly who noted that their coats were long, they could hardly have been wearing those ankle-length caped coats which feature in the photograph of the pair attired for winter travel, as suggested in Dame Joan's article. The next encounter of the Englishwomen was with a man in a cloak and shady hat sitting near a kiosk whom they describe as very dark-complexioned, pock-marked, repulsive, evil-looking. Surprisingly Monsieur Jullian believes this sinister personage to have been the aesthetic poet himself. A little further on, another man, similarly attired, directed their way. Tall, young, distinctly a gentleman, with rather long, dark hair and looking like an old picture, he is identified as Yturri, though this description does not tally with his photographs. By now one asks oneself: How was it that Miss Moberly and Miss Jourdain failed to recognise those two officials they had met earlier on?

Finally, they reached the house in front of which only Miss Moberly observed a woman sitting and examining a paper at arm's length, who she believed to be Marie-Antoinette—a doubtful identification as the Queen was very shortsighted. However, an ingenious conjecture is now put forward. To accord with the homosexuality of Montesquiou, the lady

is thought to be a male impersonator, Dame Joan adding that she [he] was showing "a good deal of leg." This is stretching a point. All that Miss Moberly said was that her skirt seemed to be short, and this is interesting. In the late 18th century, dresses for *la promenade* just covered the ankle, whereas in 1901 they were down to the ground with a little train which was held up when walking.

Nor does Dame Joan give a satisfactory explanation for the Kiosk. The Englishwomen refused to be fobbed off with this being the Belvédère, a classical closed-in octagon. They had seen a light garden kiosk, circular. Leon Rey believed this was the *Jeu de Bague* and the ladies admitted a resemblance. Pierre de Nolhac, in his book on Marie Antoinette,

tells us that musicians played in this elegant little pavilion. Miss Moberly had said it was like a small band-stand.

NONE OF THIS PROVES that *An Adventure* was a genuine extra-sensory experience. But as no rational explanation has convinced those who regard the incident with an open mind, the possibility of such an experience cannot be ruled out. It is as well to remember that experts working for the Secret Service of (at any rate) one of the major powers are said to take the para-normal very seriously.

CYNTHIA GLADWYN

London

## Keynes & the Keynesians

*Myths, Illusions, Misconceptions—By T. W. HUTCHISON*



1. MR D. E. MOGG-RIDGE ["Letters", September, 1975] claims that "it is clear" that before his death Keynes "had not come to any firm policy conclusions" about "working the economy at 'full employment'" (*italics added*). But it is reasonably clear that Keynes approached this and other related post-War problems with some quite firm conclusions, or principles, regarding the general balance between government controls and what he called "natural forces", and also that he had definite ideas about feasible "full employment" targets. It is also clear that the prestige of Keynes's name has frequently been invoked on behalf of a number of post-War policy doctrines of which there is little or no trace in the Master's writings.

2. Keynes concluded his last (posthumously published) article by emphasising that although he was prepared to resort to "exchange variation and overall import control", we "would need such expedients less if the classical medicine is also at work." (*Economic Journal*, June 1946). In fact Keynes did not regard it as necessary or desirable to rely *primarily or predominantly* on government controls, which must be used, as he put it, "not to defeat but to implement the wisdom of Adam Smith." Keynes maintained:

"I find myself moved, not for the first time, to remind contemporary economists that the classical teaching embodied some permanent truths of great

significance. . . . There are in these matters deep undercurrents at work, natural forces, one can call them, or even the invisible hand, which are operating towards equilibrium. . . . If we reject the medicine from our systems altogether, we may just drift on from expedient to expedient and never get really fit again."

Finally, Keynes deplored how much "modernist stuff, gone wrong and turned sour and silly, is circulating." (Who *could* he have been referring to?) These guidelines, or principles, of wide generality, were virtually Keynes's final words as an economist. It seems difficult to deny how profoundly and acutely distasteful they must have been to some of his academic *entourage*.

3. Lord Kahn subsequently complained (1956) that this last article of Keynes was written in a "more than usually optimistic vein, and also in a strangely complacent vein" (*Selected Essays*, p. 123). This may have referred to Keynes's excessive *short-run* optimism regarding dollar-shortage. But surely Keynes was *much less* wide of the mark regarding *long-run* dollar prospects, on which policies should be based, than the various enthusiasts for government regulations who went on predicting a disastrous dollar shortage as a chronic, permanent, world problem right up to when the "shortage" was becoming a massive surplus. Anyhow, Keynes certainly did not show himself in the least optimistic or complacent about the effectiveness of government wage controls, on behalf of which "Keynesians" have been so persistently over-optimistic for two decades or more, *e.g.*: "There has been a considerable improvement in the state of awareness of the importance of restraint" (Lord Kahn, 1958).

4. Regarding this last article of Keynes, the late Professor Jacob Viner, one of the greatest economist-scholars of his day, remarked how it "startled his disciples by its optimistic tone, and *there was serious consideration of the desirability of suppressing it*"

(*Keynes's General Theory*, ed. R. Lekachman, p. 265, italics added).

This is an extraordinary suggestion, whether valid or invalid. That the idea of suppressing the last major article by Keynes might even have been considered simply leaves one breathless.

5. As regards "full employment" targets, Keynes had (in June 1942) estimated that, with no deficiency in aggregate demand, unemployment could or should be at about 4½%. He also expressed himself dubious about maintaining Beveridge's 3% target. Obviously Keynes was assuming that no undue risks should be taken with inflation. In fact there are no good grounds for supposing that Keynes would have subscribed to the pseudo-Keynesian doctrine that *any* desired target level of unemployment could or should be maintained, or that he would have disregarded any serious risk of inflation.

Indeed there are no grounds for supposing that Keynes would have supported the following four "Keynesian"—or pseudo-Keynesian—policy-doctrines:

(a) *That the unemployment percentage should be pushed down well below 3% to 2% or below; or that Beveridge's 3% target was "obsolete"* (Lord Kahn, 1956); or that any target above 2% was "cold-blooded and impossible" (Lady Robinson, 1966); or that the target of 0% unemployment should be preferred (Sir Roy Harrod, 1967).

(b) *That price-stability should have a minor or much diminished priority as an objective; or that the "dangers" to be emphasised were those of "a Régime of Stable Prices", and that advocating the merits of absolute price-stability was not only "dangerous", but "highly prejudicial to the country's interests"* (Lords Kaldor and Kahn to the Radcliffe Committee, 1958).

(c) *That any dangers of inflation could and must be checked mainly or entirely by incomes or wages policies.* It was a disastrous "mistake to suppose that the proper function of monetary and budgetary policy was to secure a tolerable behaviour of prices" (Lord Kahn, 1958).

(d) *That on top of "full employment"—at levels well above those envisaged by Keynes—the objective of "full growth" must be adopted, or growth in accordance with maximum potential; which, it was stated by Sir Roy Harrod, had been advocated by "many economists who would claim to have drawn their inspiration from Keynes"* (ENCOUNTER, January 1964). The rate of growth could and should be raised by "comprehensive planning" and "purposive direction" (Lord Kaldor, 1958); or "we could evidently quickly work up to six or seven per cent" if we abandoned our defence effort (Lady Robinson, 1964). Of course there is hardly a vestige to be found in Keynes's published writings of the kind of fruitless, pseudo-Keynesian growthmanship which has so seriously aggravated Britain's inflation problem (especially from 1971–3).

7. *I shall not speculate* as to the influence or effects of these pseudo-Keynesian doctrines on the British economy in recent years. In one of the most often-quoted passages of economic literature—the closing lines of *The General Theory*—Keynes made extremely high claims for the influence of the "ideas" of econo-

mists "both when they are right and when they are wrong." But it is arguable that sometimes, or often, this influence is much less than Keynes maintained. It is *possible*, in this case, that in spite of the ennoblement of much of the Economics establishment, and especially of the exponents of pseudo-Keynesian doctrines, the British inflation problem, absolutely and relatively, would have now been just as serious if none of these doctrines had ever been put forward.

However, we may conclude (1) that if these pseudo-Keynesian doctrines have had any influence it has been in the direction of making the British inflation problem—the most serious British economic problem of the post-war period—more severe than those of other countries, where these doctrines were less (or not) influential; and (2) that these doctrines were certainly never advocated by Keynes.

One may not agree with some of Professor F. A. Hayek's criticisms of Keynes's theories, but one could not but concur when he recently wrote:

"I have good reason to believe that he would have disapproved of what his followers did in the post-war period. If he had not died so soon, he would have become one of the leaders in the fight against inflation. . . ."

And, it might be added, against the doctrines of pseudo-Keynesian economics.

Unless one is prepared to deny completely Keynes's famous assertion about the great influence of the ideas of economists, it would seem of some importance for understanding our present position that this recent passage in the history of economic thought be accurately set out and understood.

T. W. HUTCHISON

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University of Birmingham*

## Nisbet's Rousseau & "Equality"

ROBERT NISBET's article "Rousseau & Equality" (ENCOUNTER, September 1974) makes it evident that Rousseau never recognised the ambiguities and complexities of *equality* as a political and social principle. Instead he treated it as a simple idea posing no special problems of interpretation or application. In fairness to Rousseau, we should recall that the concept of *equality* can be employed without much difficulty in other contexts, such as mathematics; that its adoption as a basic principle of political and social organisation was in his day a new departure; and that there had as yet been little opportunity to work out its implications in practice. Thus Rousseau's mistake may be excusable, but it was a mistake nevertheless. He treated a highly complex principle as if it were simple—which is one reason, I think, why *equality* degenerated so easily into a slogan.

Nisbet makes the same mistake, though without similar excuse. Following Rousseau all too closely, he treats *equality* as a simple principle requiring no clarification. He talks of "equality", "egalitarianism", and the "dogma of equality" without stopping to inquire what these terms might be taken to mean, or whether they might not be open to widely different interpretations and applications in different contexts,

as in fact they are. This misconception vitiates the main conclusion of his article—which he attributes to Rousseau and in which he concurs—that the “dogma of equality” could only be instituted and maintained by a fearsome combination of political, social and quasi-religious power. Though such might be the case for certain kinds of equality, it is manifestly not the case for other kinds. Hence, the need to make distinctions.

When anybody talks of *equality* or *inequality* as applied to political or social matters, the first task is to determine what kind of equality is in issue, what individuals or groups are involved, under what conditions, and with what ends in view. The word “equality” might refer to some or any of the following:

- Equality of natural capacities;*
- Equality of social status or privilege;*
- Equality of opportunity to demonstrate special capacities possessed by some but not all;*
- Equality of human worth regardless of differences in capacity or status;*
- Equality of reward for like capacities, like efforts, or like services;*
- Equality of reward regardless of capacities, efforts, or services;*
- Equality of provision for like needs;*
- Equality of provision regardless of needs;*
- Equality of access to, and under, the legal process;*
- Equality of access to, and participation in, the political process;*
- Equality in freedom from, or subjection to, social control of individual conduct.*

This list, which could be refined and extended, is sufficient to show that there is no simple “dogma of equality.” It is impossible that there could be such a dogma, since some of the specific senses and applications of *equality* are mutually incompatible. We are apt to forget that judgments of *equality* assert or presuppose differences as well as similarities; indeed, these are usually two sides of the same coin. The declaration that all men are created equal did not assert that all men are *alike*, as peas are said to be alike, but that all human beings have the same intrinsic worth despite individual *differences* in stature, capacities, *etc.* More concretely, the maxim “equal pay for equal work” excludes not only unequal pay for equal work but also equal pay for unequal work. By contrast, the maxim “equal pay for all types of work” would exclude equality of services, efforts, and responsibilities as a factor in computing rewards.

One merit of recent writers like John Rawls and Christopher Jencks is that they try to disentangle some of the different senses of *equality* and to deal with vexing problems of concrete application. Nisbet’s bald assertion that “What is fundamental and overriding in both Jencks and Rawls is . . . hostility . . . towards inequality in any and all forms, under whatever kind of social order” is as blind as it is patently false. Each of these writers rejects certain kinds of inequality but not others. Rawls is particularly explicit in defending certain kinds of inequality—so much so that one British critic, Brian Barry, has characterised him as “an unreconstructed Gladstonian liberal.” (Brian Barry, *The Liberal Theory of Justice*, Oxford, 1973, p. 50.) Though one might perhaps quarrel with

this estimate, Barry has read Rawls with care, which Nisbet obviously has not.

George Orwell once observed that the worst thing a prose writer can do with words is to surrender to them, letting abstract terms carry him along without regard to their concrete significance. It strikes me that Nisbet’s article, for all its smoothness of style, is a notable example of what Orwell deplored.

PHILIP H. RHINELANDER

Stanford University  
California

MR RHINELANDER’S EXERCISE in scholastic pedantry actually makes bold to condescend to Rousseau, one of the two or three genuinely powerful and original minds of the past two centuries.

Rousseau, one gathers, was incapable of appreciating the refinements which we the moderns have given to equality in higher education and other realms in which it flourishes today. Would that contemporary prophets knew half as much as Rousseau knew about this dogma! And dogma it is. How amusing to be told that something cannot be a dogma when it contains discrepant meanings. Where, in heaven’s name would Christianity be? Or political science with its dogma of sovereignty? *Dogma* comes from a Greek root meaning literally to “seem good”, and there isn’t much that hasn’t seemed good enough at one time or other to justify burning and hanging in the areas of religion and politics, the two areas of life richest in dogma.

My article stated clearly the kind of equality I was writing about: which is the kind its prophets are today writing about: equality, not of opportunity, but of *result* or *condition*; in the social, educational, and cultural spheres, naturally.

As for John Rawls: given his all-embracing “difference principle” he can afford to defend “certain kinds of inequality.” Rousseau, having set forth his concepts of general will, civil religion, and his own variation of the difference principle toward the end of the third discourse, felt free to defend certain kinds of inequality. Who wouldn’t? But I have reviewed Mr Rawls at length (*The Public Interest*, Spring 1974), and apart only from observing that I was much too generous there with the book, I shall say no more.

ROBERT NISBET

Columbia University

## Bernstein & the Webbs

SINCE I am rather weak in mathematics, I cannot check Max Geltman’s computation that “if one were to document all of the contempt for Jews in the writings of Beatrice and Sidney Webb, it would take almost a full-size issue of *ENCOUNTER*” [September]. For the remaining space in such a special number I would, however, suggest one consideration to supplement Margaret Cole’s rebuttal (*ENCOUNTER*, November).

Thanks to Professor James Joll’s kindness, I just received a Xerox photo of an interesting title page. It is from Edward Bernstein’s most famous publication,

*Evolutionary Socialism*, translated and edited in 1909 by "J. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P." in the ILP's Socialist Library. The L.S.E. copy bears in superb "Teutonic" English this dedication:

"Sidney & Beatrice Webb, in high esteem, July 5th 1909, Ed. Bernstein"

Was the dedicator perhaps unfamiliar with the writings of the Webbs? Erich Dombrowski in his *Köpfe der Gegenwart* reminds us that Mrs Bernstein—Gine and Edward were the German counterparts of Beatrice and Sidney—translated the Webbs' *Industrial Democracy*. In fact, Regina Bernstein not only translated *The History of Trade Unionism*, but provided it with notes for the clarification of English expressions and institutions, while Edward Bernstein added critical comments. He fumed, for example, because the Webbs did not master Marx as he did. However, in a lengthy postscript Bernstein praised "the eminently practical value of these studies." The second edition of the history and *Industrial Democracy*, no less than 1487 pages, he hailed in his journal *Documente des Socialismus* as "the two classical works" (Vol. I, p.432).

Was Bernstein at least unaware of Beatrice's research on East London? In 1903 he wrote for *Jüdische Statistik* some remarks about Jewish immigration to England, which tends to prove that he knew the pertinent literature.

Perhaps, then, he was anti-Semitic? As has been shown in my edition of the correspondence between Engels and Bernstein, he occasionally indulged in racially suggestive jokes when trying to ridicule a Jewish person. This betrayed all the more a questionable taste as Bernstein himself was of Jewish origin. But, on the other hand, he was the first to detect and collect outspoken *antisemitica*. In page after page he denounced anti-Semitic political practices.

Eventually, Bernstein even sympathised with Zionism, though he was critical of some of its proclamations. "*Wer nicht Mass zu halten versteht, ist der grösste Feind des jüdischen Volkes*", he warned in a letter dated 18 January 1930, expressing gratitude for a "heart-warming Jewish product made from British wool"—a Palestinian birthday present. I have no doubt that Edward Bernstein would have favoured a most carefully balanced appraisal of the Webbs' anti-Jewish utterances which Edmund Silberner in his authoritative book on Socialists and the Jewish Question cites and criticises on less than four pages.

HELMUT HIRSCH

Düsseldorf

## From Leroux to Jaurès

ROBERT WISTRICH (ENCOUNTER, August) doesn't really disagree with my assessment of the anti-Semitism of many of the early socialist leaders, except to note that I am right about Beatrice Webb, but that I tend to overstate the case with regard to Saint-Simon and especially Jean Jaurès.

As for his defence of Pierre Leroux from the taint of anti-Semitism *because* he studied Hebrew the less said the better. But this needs to be said. Originally I only quoted a smidgen of Leroux' Jew-hatred. Here is the full quotation: "It is quite evident, my friends, that when we speak of Jews we mean *the Jewish spirit*, the spirit of profit, of lucre, of gain, the spirit of *commerce*, of speculation, in a word, the banker's spirit." (See articles in *Jewish Social Studies* by Edmund Silberner and Zosa Szajkowski.) As for Jaurès, it is true, he seemed to undergo a change of heart toward the end of the Dreyfus affair (not too much of an alteration, at that). But here is what he recorded in his collected works, Volume III, pages 84 and 85 (in French): my translation follows:

"What are the Jews, closely knit to each other, and separated from other men as enemies and who are set apart effectively by blood, religion, lucrative profession, and by a common hatred for the rest of humanity; who monopolise all business and wealth, and who bend all free men under the yoke of money? What is therefore this Jewry if it is not a dangerous State within a State?"

Readers in this century of the Holocaust should not be misled into believing that one can be a nice kind of anti-Semite. As Sartre has said, all anti-Semitism leads to the death of Jews.

MAX GELTMAN

New York City

## "Grim Argument"

HERB GREER makes the point in "Grim Argument" [April], that terrorists should be treated in the same manner as any other murderers. However, he states that terrorists "were and still are terribly and terrifyingly normal." He goes on to say that "They are hardly people in whom something has slipped." I fail to see how a person who strikes out blindly, killing innocent people for political motives, can be termed "normal." Intelligence and shrewdness aside, something *has* "slipped" when a person is unable to see and comprehend the sacredness of human life, which he has no right to take away. This observation is elucidated by Mr Greer's comment that "It is well nigh impossible for him [the terrorist] to know or feel that he is doing wrong."

Greer goes on to say that these antinomian killers "should not be regarded as *mere* perverts or as sadists." He is, in fact, implying that the terrorists (whom he condemns) are more humane than perverts and sadists.

Concerning the pros and the cons of execution, I agree that the threat of execution is ineffective as a deterrent. Mr Greer mentions the "sense of human dignity" afforded by execution. In my mind, a terrorist who has committed a murder is not worthy of an ounce of dignity. In this sense, it would seem that life imprisonment would be the better punishment. However, as Greer points out, "They are totally

implacable, striking again and again until captured, and if they manage to escape, they continue quite as viciously as before." In view of parole and other means of "escape", one cannot help but see that the only means of dealing with these killers is death itself.

DAVID L BOLGER

READING YOUR READERS' LETTERS is a bewildering experience. How, after all, *does* one communicate? Is it really possible? Maybe, if any of the correspondents would actually read what I wrote.

If Mr Reyes ["Letters," September] does so he will find that the arguments against the death penalty are dealt with, one by one. I am unsympathetic to his "cause-effect" excuse for terrorism. It is common and amounts to saying, "They wuz pushed, they ain't responsible." Noting that Mr Reyes grants political responsibility to terrorists, one can't help remarking a contradiction in there somewhere. Again: in deliberately and *on principle* eschewing respect for human life, the terrorist forfeits his right to respect for his own life. Naturally terrorists understand this. Few of their defenders do.

I would question Ms Pollock's ["Letters," September] experience of terrorists. My own, which is personal and direct, convinces me that they do not "lose perspective of their actions." "Reassure" and "pacify" do not mean the same thing, and it seems to me that the welfare of "the people" and "the nation" cannot be separated in this instance. In her "retaliation" plea, Ms Pollock (like Mr Reyes with his "conferences") allows the terrorist equal status with legally constituted authority and normal citizenry. I find that a curious point of view, even bizarre. Perhaps Ms Pollock did not notice the Jewish joke I quoted.

Mr Bolger "is in fact implying" in his letter that he cannot read the English language. Among other things my piece is an analysis of the *difference* between terrorists and "any other murderers." And I would gently remind Mr Bolger of the relationship in our society between mental affliction and responsibility for action. One is generally taken to exclude the other. To say that a man is responsible for his actions is not to say that he is humane, nor to imply it, either. My comments on terrorists both say and imply that they are the exact opposite of humane. In his confused echo of my conclusion Mr Bolger confirms my worst fears over the tangled thicket of emotion and intellectual process which obscures this dreadful matter.

HERB GREER

London

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John Wain is Professor of Poetry, University of Oxford. His Oxford lectures, including "Alternative Poetry", "On the Breaking of Forms" and "Poetry & Social Criticism" (ENCOUNTER, June 1974, August 1975, and June 1976) will be included, together with his article in this issue, in his forthcoming book, *Professing Poetry*. In 1974 he was awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for his biography of Samuel Johnson (Macmillan).

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Anthony Thwaite's latest book of poems, *A Portion for Foxes*, will be published this spring by Oxford University Press.

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Alan Brownjohn is a Lecturer in English at Battersea College of Education. His most recent volume of poetry is *A Song of Good Life* (Secker & Warburg, 1975).

London

**HELP!** The term technical assistance has been in use in ODM [—i.e. the Ministry for Overseas Development]... to describe a broad range of activities. This term is now believed to have a derogatory meaning and to cause resentment in a number of developing countries, and the Minister has approved its replacement for all ODM purposes by the term "technical co-operation" which is already widely used in international circles. (Notice from the Directorate of Overseas Surveys.)

OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT NOTICE

London

**WHO/WHOM?** Deplorable, to my mind is the occurrence in television productions of simple grammatical mistakes that no educated person would make. In the first "I Claudius" episode (adapted from Robert Graves) Augustus Caesar is made to say, "Are you worried about me going?" ("In me best toga" he might have added.) This use of the accusative personal pronoun in place of a possessive adjective must surely be the commonest howler of the present day.

In the same programme, Livia is made to say, "Whom does he think I am?" Here one gets the impression that the writer is staking a claim to grammatical expertise. The claim is spurious. No one in normal speech would use the accusative form of the interrogative here, and it is of course grammatically wrong.

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

London

**BLURRED COLOURS:** The race relations industry has got itself into a tangle with its terminology because of euphemism and hypocrisy.

Accordingly there has been a ludicrous search for an acceptable euphemism to describe what is being done, as silly as hunting a snark or a will-o'-the-wisp. Each new euphemism for racial discrimination rapidly becomes as explicit and offensive as its predecessors, and therefore has to be replaced. The Home Office tried "patial" (intended as a loose synonym for white) and "non-patial" (non-white).

Within the past decade, starting from the United States, Negro civil-rights militants have turned "black" into a term of pride. Black has become politically a beautiful epithet for most West Indians in Britain. Many Asians do not like it, however, detecting derogatory connotations from the obsolete vocabulary of the Raj in the word; and judging that in any case it is an inaccurate description of, for example, Kashmiris.

The revolving cycle of euphemism has turned full circle in the United States: black has become acceptable, replacing Afro-American, which replaced Negro, which replaced coloured, which replaced darky, which in turn replaced black. Coloured is a flabby euphemism, and is considered contemptuous by those so described.

The latest silly extremity into which we have been

forced by euphemism is "non-white", as if the rude Anglo-Saxon natives were ever remotely white, instead of muddy beige. The use can just be supported by reference to white and black grapes, which are green and purple, or to white and black coffee. Non-white is a fatuous statisticians' word, but maybe it is the best that we can do.

THE TIMES

Winchester

**RESEARCH:** A copy of "Who's Who" was found among bomb-making equipment in a Southampton room used by an IRA active service unit, Sir Peter Rawlinson, Q.C., said at Winchester Crown Court yesterday. This book, in such a room occupied by such people, could only be for use in selecting possible assassination targets.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

London

**MALAPROPISMS:** A newsreader on London Broadcasting announced this week that steps were being taken to "pervert" a seamen's strike.

It seems that the whole world is joining in the quest for Malapropisms and mispronunciations. Readers notify me of the lady with a painful "Ulster" in her mouth; the shrines one can see in Catholic countries in commemoration of "St Mary Mandolin"; the police at the scene of a crime, who threw "an accordion" round the street; the touching sight of the deceased George V lying in state on a "catapult"; and the bride who hoped that "spaghetti" would be thrown over her by those waiting at the church door.

I particularly like also the story of the priest called in to "circumcize" a ghost; the student who was always to be found "embossed" in a book; the pilot who left his aircraft by means of the "ejaculation seat"; the "molecule" customarily worn in the eye of Lord Peter Wimsey; the painful "Cistercian" method of childbirth; the rent for a property which was demanded "per anum"; the advice that was received on the planting of "enemas", those colourful flowers; the overcrowded conditions which sometimes prevail in our "menthol" hospitals; the drowning swimmer who was revived by means of "artificial insemination"; and the rainbow which was said by an onlooker to contain "all the colours of the rectum."

SUNDAY TIMES

Maidstone

**BE THOU MY HARM:** It might be better to call do-gooders do-harmers, Judge Streeter, Kent senior judge, said yesterday at the swearing in of 32 magistrates at Maidstone Crown Court.

"I do not really care much for the phrase. Of course they are well-intentioned people. As often as not they know not the harm that they do, but they do it just the same.

"They are really the folk who fail to distinguish need from greed. They are abdicators who see discipline as something harmful."

DAILY TELEGRAPH

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